

# **NATIONAL ACTION**

**(SECOND EDITION)**

**A PLAN FOR  
THE NATIONAL RECOVERY  
OF IRELAND**

**ONE SHILLING**

# NATIONAL ACTION

A PLAN FOR THE NATIONAL  
RECOVERY OF IRELAND

(SECOND EDITION)

JOSEPHUS ANELIUS

PUBLISHED BY THE GAELIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION  
CROKE HOUSE, CLONLIFFE ROAD  
DUBLIN

August, 1943.



FIRST EDITION DECEMBER, 1942.

SECOND EDITION AUGUST, 1943.

*Printed by CAHILL & CO., LTD., Parkgate Printing Works, Dublin.*

# CONTENTS.

	PAGE
FOREWORD.....	v
INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION	ix
PREFACE	xvii
INTRODUCTION	xix

## CHAPTER I

NATIONAL ORGANISATION AND NATIONAL ACTION	23
Nationalism, 24 ; Partition, 27 ; Secret Societies, 29 ; Politics, 30.	

## CHAPTER II

A PLAN FOR THE NATIONAL RECOVERY OF IRELAND	36
Parish Councils, 42.	

## CHAPTER III

NATIONAL EDUCATION AND NATIONAL ACTION	50
Primary Education, 51 ; Secondary Education, 58 ; The National Language, 64 ; Programmes, 72 ; Vocational Education, 74 ; Agricultural Education, 76 ; University Education, 77.	

## CHAPTER IV

NATIONAL ECONOMY AND NATIONAL ACTION	78
Finance, 93 ; Fashion, 98 ; Wheat, 101.	

## CHAPTER V

NATIONAL GAMES AND PASTIMES AND NATIONAL ACTION	109
---	-----

## CHAPTER VI

THE CIVIL SERVICE AND NATIONAL ACTION	113
---------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VII

NATIONAL POPULATION AND NATIONAL ACTION	117
---	-----



## D'ÉIRINN

A Róisin Dub, toirbhirim duit ó mo éoróe amac, le h-uílaíocht agus le mór-éion, an Córas simplíoch seo de Shníomachas Náisiúnta, le súil go raibí sé 'un tairbe agus 'un leasa duit. I dteangaim na nGall a beirim an Córas seo, mar éitear dom, san íle-úris in a bfuil tú fá láchair, de bárr gabála Gall, sur móroí a tairbe duit a tabairt sa teangaim sin. Fíor-rígneas agus an teacht-aníar a tug slán tú ó'n náimíocht allmúraí le tuilleadh agus seacht gcéad bliadam. Inniu tá náimíocht a bfuil níos measa ná sin le claoíocht agus, mar atá, an easaontaíocht, an leisgeamlaíocht, an breágh-aítríocht, agus an tréigsin náisiúnta. Aitcúingim, in Ainm Dé, ar do éolainn dílis, roir ós agus aosta, in a n-aontaíocht agus in a neart tú tárrtáil tré Shníomachas Náisiúnta ó do náimíocht amuigh, agus ó seachmall, ó faillíocht, agus ó leanbaróíocht a lán de do muintir féin istigh, ó is í seo uair do gear-éiríochtaí.

## RÉAMNÁD

Tá lútsáir orm an réamrád seo a scríobadh do'n leabhar seo "Saothar Gaedhealaí". Tírítear dam-sa sur ruo maic leabhar de'n cineál seo a beit ar fásáil go saor as Gaedil na tíre. Is iomdala leabhar a scríobadh le bliadantaí anuas ar náisiúntaí, agus ar imteachtaí an náisiúin, ac go dtí seo níor cuireadh le céile leabhar ioncurta léite seo—leabhar 'na bfuil scéim úr riaghlaithe leagtha amach, leabhar 'na dtí linn a feiceáil carde mar tís ar gcuro smaoidiú a cur i ngníomh.

Is féidir go mbéid iongantas ar cur maic daoine surb é Cumann Lúit-Cleas Gaedheal atá as cur amach an leabhair seo. Seans go n-abairtear liom go rab sé tuisce i scomharde go rab riagail asainn san baint ar bit a beit asainn, mar cumann, le poilitróaíocht, agus nac mbaineann an leabhar seo le ruo ar bit eile. Ac an duine a deireas sin, ní tuisceann sé meon agus dearcadh an ugdair ná cuspóir an leabhair. Ní abrainn an t-ugdar oiread agus focal amáin i n-éadan dream poilitróaíochta ar bit. Na loctanna atá le fásáil aige ar ghaite poilitróaíochta, ní ar na daoine ná ar na dreamanna atá páirteac san obair a feibeann sé iad ac ar an córas riaghlaithe ó tús go deireadh. Síleann sé nac bfuil an córas atá i bferdm ins an tír seo anois, nac bfoireann sé do'n náisiún ná do'n tsaoiteamlaíocht.

Annsin is dóitche go mbéid corr-bail de Cumann Lúit Cleas Gaedheal as gearán nac bfuil cunnatas níos iomláime ins an leabhar seo ar na cluitcí—an baint atá aca le náisiúntaí sa tír agus an áit ar leit ba cóir a beit aca ins an scéim úir. Ac caitefmíto smaoidiú ar seo—go rab an t-ugdar as braí córas riaghlaithe a leagadh amach agus nac dtiocfaid leis dul isteaí go mion i roinnt ar bit de'n córas sin. Déarfair liom fosta, is dóitche, nac gcuro-eócaro an leabhar seo le cúis na gcluitcí. Ac sé an freagra atá asainn ar sin ná seo: má curoigeann sé leis an



náisiún, curocóirí sí le gac páirt de'n náisiún—na cluitcís com mair le gac ruid eile. Is ionann náisiúntaíocht agus sum iomlán na tréithe a baineas le náisiún amháin agus na mbaineann le náisiún ar bith eile. Ar na tréithe sin tá an teangaid, na cluitcís, an ceol, na damsaí, com mair le stair agus litríocht na tíre. Dá mbíod an saogal Gaedelaí mar buró mair le h-ugóir an leabair seo é beir, beir na rudaí seo uilig i réim: beir náisiún Gaedelaí againn—náisiún a cócóirí agus a buanfaid tréithe ar sinneir, agus a beir i n-inneir a curo oibre a déanam i saogal an lae inniu.

Ruid eile de, tá sé o'fíadaí orainn mar baill de cumann náisiúntaíocht sum a curo i n-gac ruid a baineas leis an náisiúntaíocht. Le fíde focal a curo i b'focal amháin, tá sé o'fíadaí orainn ar scair féin a déanam i n-Gaedelaí na tíre. Agus má tá sin amháin caiteimíod fáilte a curo roim an leabair seo: caiteimíod curoíú léite ar achan dóig, agus sin an fáil gur cuiread amach i faoi coimisce an cumainn 'sagainne. Agus sin an tuise a bfuil an Árd-Comhairle as iarrad ar na fo-cumainn an oiread curoighe agus is féidir leo a tabairt do'n leabair. Caiteimíod an leabair a scapad ar an pobal. Caiteimíod gac Gaedelaí an leabair a léigean, agus caiteimíod dearcad cuise sin. Agus smaointigimis ar seo: le linn beir as curoíú leis an leabair seo, beirim as curoíú linn féin, mar dá mbíod an córas atá cearta as an uigóir i b'feir sa tír, raíad sé ar soir do na cluitcís féin, mar beirad sé an sean-spiorad ar ais ins an tír.

Táim cinnte go gcuirfid luí aic-beoí na Gaedilge fáilte roim an leabair seo, mar tá a fíos aca na bfuil go dtí seo don córas ann, taob amuis de na scoileanna, cum sum an pobail i scoitcime a díriú ar an ceist mór náisiúntaíocht seo, agus is luí na san go fóill a bfuil de gléasanna agus de oíróirí ann cum an Gaedilge a coimead dá labairt nuair a bíonn an scoil fáilte as an dream óg. Is mór an t-easnam é seo i saogal an náisiúin, agus mair féidir é leigean, is féidir maíonam a déanam air, agus scéim a déanam réir sa dóig go leigeanfar é nuair a tiocfas an t-am agus an tráit cuise.



Is greammáir an rud é go bfuil “ buiro”, agus córais mar iad ann do muca, biafas, móim, aibléis, cuairteoirí, srl., agus airsead an stáit gá cáiteam go tiuſ ortá, ac náe bfuil bóro ná scéim dá saſas pé brat an stáit ann do’n ſaebíls. Is cóir an scéal sin do leigheas, agus sílim go ndéanfaíocht luſt léighe an leabair seo iarraíocht an scéal a leigheas luſt nó mall. Caitéirí côm-eaſar a déanam ar an iarraíocht cun an teanſar a aic-beocáid, mar ní haon tairbe beic aſ priocáid annseo agus annsiú mar atáir pé láir, ac scéim iomlán, côm-óiríſte, náisiúnta a leaſad amaſ agus í cur i nſníom ó “ bárr go bun”.

Agus anois, buí máit liom focal nó dó a ráid le na héireannaig náe bfuil baint aca le cumann náisiúnta ar bit, náe ſcaiteann móran ama aſ smaóitiú ar ceisteanna fá riaglá na tíre, a fáſas na h-ábair sin aſ luſt na poilitríeacta. Má léigheann ſiaſan an leabair seo go cúramaſ, béir sé ſoiléar dóib “ go bfuil rud éigin lobá ſa ſtát ”—go bfuil córas i bferóm aſainn, ar ſlacamar a bunáſa díreac ó ſaſain, náe bfoireann sé dúinn agus ſur mictí dúinn aſrú a déanam. Tuigſir ſiaſ ſur cóir dúinn córas úr a déanam amaſ—córas a cótócas na ruad ís outcaſaighe i ſibialtaíct agus i ſaóiteamlaíct na tíre.

Ar na léigheoirí béir dáime eoláca: béir cur aca níos eoláighe ná an t-uſdar ar na ceisteanna a ótráíctann sé ortá, agus béir ſiaſ aſ fáſáil loſta air cionnus náe ótéigheann sé domáin go leór inſ na ceisteanna. Ac ní cuireann an t-uſdar i ſcéill ſur feroir leis an focal deireannaſ a ráid ar ſac ceist. Is fáda uair a leicéro de báramail! Sé an rud atá déanta aighe ná an pioctúir a óatú in a iomláime aſ leighe do dáime eile na mion-rudá a líonad ísteac.

Sílim féin go bfuil molaíocht ar leic tuillte aſ an cáibríl ſan leabair seo ar ceist an airſí. Veró dáime áiríte aſ éileam náe ótéigheann an t-uſdar go ótí croíde na ceiste, ac dúime ar bit atá eolac ar an ceist seo, tá fíos aighe go mbéad leabair i n-ionad cáibríle de óit leis an ceist seo a ſcrúid i ſceart. Taisbeánann an t-uſdar caróe tá cearr le scéim na mbannic mar tá ſiaſ aſainn



anois, agus cruthaígeann sé go bfuil achrú de rít san mull.  
Molann sé an scéim is fóirstiníge leis.

Mar an gcéadna leis an cúro eile de'n leabhar. Tá  
áobhar smaoitíge i ngach alt. Tá súil agam go n'éanfar  
an smaoitiú sin agus go n-áicirí go n'éanfar beart  
d'a réir.

“ Mo beannaíocht leat, a scríbhinn ! ”

p. mac CON MÍDE,  
Uachtarán, Cumann Lúit-Cléas Gaedhal.

Mí Deireadh Fómhair, 1942.

# NATIONAL ACTION

## Foreword to Second Edition

The first edition of NATIONAL ACTION was published in December, 1942. This edition, 6,000 copies, is practically sold out, and the text is now reprinted without alteration of any kind.

Neither in the reviews nor otherwise has any serious adverse criticism been advanced against this work. In fact, with the exception of persons who have political, economic and other vested interests which, from selfish motives they wish to guard, NATIONAL ACTION has met with overwhelming approval from the vast majority of its readers. Most persons have vested interests, of one kind or another, but it is only those who place their vested interests above the interests of the people as a whole, who are a danger to National Action and to the nation. The great variety of people, holding many different views on public questions, who agree in principle with the book, is very encouraging and full of hope.

The Dublin daily Press treated NATIONAL ACTION with uncommon lightness. Two of the daily papers failed to review the book, while the reviewer in the third attempted to discredit NATIONAL ACTION by taking minor sentences away from their context, by levity, and by guardedly insinuating that it contained an attack on the Church.\*

---

\* "Even the Church does not escape. It must not be doing its duty, for part of the National Plan is that the Church should 'undertake a nation-wide, far-reaching spiritual drive,' and the author even gives some hints on how this is to be done. . . 'Fashion should be sponsored by a National Body, backed by the State.' The length of our trousers and the shade of our ties fixed by Statutory Rules and Orders' . . . There are some good points in this muddle-headed production, but they are so deeply buried in the debris that it is a hopeless task to salvage them. The whole book is an example of loose thinking and of reckless playing with the most dangerous of all instruments—words."—Review by NN., *Irish Independent* (4-1-1943).



To quote only one clerical critic, out of many who have all favourably reviewed NATIONAL ACTION, here is what Father Felim O'Brien, O.F.M., Professor of Philosophy, University College, Galway, wrote in *Assisi*, March, 1943. After criticising several plans prepared for other countries because of "belief in the infallibility of economics or of politics, to solve all problems"—Father O'Brien goes on to say: "It is refreshing, therefore, to turn to a plan conceived on the Christian plane, a plan that neglects no factor—religious, social, national, economic, cultural—that could influence the all-round betterment of our own country. . . . Almost every problem that faces the country is discussed with wisdom and common sense . . . no one can read the book without feeling inspired and encouraged . . . One of the many good things the book emphasises is the need for a healthy nationality; we are fast losing our national consciousness, and are being absorbed into a dangerous, characterless, Hollywood cosmopolitanism that is neutral to our traditional, moral, religious and national values . . . No citizen who wishes to be a worker in building a better Ireland can afford to overlook this plan."

Another Dublin daily paper tried to brand the book as being "political" in the Party sense.\*

The word "politics" has, of course, at least two distinct meanings. Its chief or primary one is: "The science of government, that part of ethics which has to do with the regulation and government of a nation or state."—(*Webster's Dictionary*.) In this sense, NATIONAL ACTION, like every other book, paper or speech which deals with national organisation, in any shape or form, is political, and in this sense every good citizen is an active politician. In this sense also, every secular organisation in the country is, or should be, political.

A second meaning of the word "politics" is: "The

---

\* "Its Central Council (the G.A.A.) has recently sponsored and published a pamphlet in which a flying leap was made from the realm of sport to the realm of politics. One of the officials responsible for this new departure has sought to justify it on the grounds that because the pamphlet proposed the abolition of all political parties it was non-political." Editorial, *Irish Press* (27-4-1943).



management of a political party, the conduct and contests of political parties."

In this second sense NATIONAL ACTION is rigidly and absolutely non-political. It neither mentions, praises nor criticises any political party; nor does it propose the establishment of any new political party. It deals with the party political system of government, which every fair-minded person will agree, is an entirely different matter.

We are so schooled in and imbued with party politics in this country that loyalty to "party" usually outshadows and dominates our loyalty to the Nation or State. As a result of this the great majority of people understand only the second meaning of the word "politics." It is quite unfair, therefore, to say that a book is political, knowing well that people will attach only this second meaning to the word, and will assume that its context is party political in substance and in trend.

Some persons, while agreeing with the basic plan outlined in NATIONAL ACTION, call for more detailed planning as well. If we accept the general basic plan, detailed planning built upon this framework, can be easily filled in; but we must first have and understand a proper outline. We cannot build up any comprehensive, well-regulated national structure without a frame, and any detailed planning, otherwise drafted, will almost certainly be at fault. This is all important because this is where we have failed in Ireland during the past twenty years—wrangling over and magnifying, out of balanced proportion, all kinds of sections while overlooking the aggregate of basic national factors, as one inseparable whole. NATIONAL ACTION asserts, without qualification, that our present political, economic, educational, social and other framework structure is unsound; that our national values and philosophy are unsound, and that our political framework is the basic error of all. It shows where these values and systems are unsound, but it also indicates outline or framework alternatives.

Other readers have picked out details, here and there, with which they could not agree. Differences of this kind



are, of course, to be expected ; but it shows the danger of entering extensively into detailed planning at this stage. Many, who perhaps may only have read the outline plan superficially, will mistake the tree for the forest and will thereby side-track and overlook the main purpose in view. This main purpose is the basic plan outlined in Chapter II ; and while being very simple it is revolutionary, inasmuch as it advocates a complete change from the present party political system of government, which has failed so dismally during the past twenty years.

It cannot be over-emphasised that a coalition government is not a national government, and that it is practically impossible to get a real national government on party political issues.

To say that this party political system cannot be permanently overthrown, that no matter what is done it will re-establish itself, is purely hypothetical reasoning. It is based, I suggest, on our present experiences, outlooks, systems and orientation. There is no proof that this outcome is inevitable. Big political parties, for example even with an artificially constituted party political policy, usually stick together, and seldom break up into minor parties. Why should we assume then, that in much more favourable circumstances, a National Government based on a national policy, would fall to pieces ?

A question, arising from this kind of reasoning, which has been asked, mostly too by persons who agree that the plan itself is sound and practical, is : How is it going to be put into operation ? The answer to this question has been deliberately omitted. Several legitimate ways, all within the bounds of Christian Social Teaching, could be given, but these would merely afford " vested interests " an opportunity for raising obstructive controversy, alarming prospects and abuse, in order to kill, or to turn aside, the lurking danger to their own interests, before it could go far.

The following sentences from pages 37 and 38 cause some well-meaning readers the greatest doubt : " To institute this change demands nothing more drastic than



a mental reformation. A . . . proclamation might be prepared . . . Having framed a . . . programme . . . we will require some suitable young persons to carry it out."

These statements were not advanced as an airy method of getting rid of the key problems of the whole scheme, or in order to slur over, in a few apparent platitudes, the actual solution. It is very difficult, however, to press a great quantity of important and pregnantly constituted material, all charged with closely packed ideas, into a small space, without seeming somewhat equivocal to readers, here and there.

The first sentence quoted was simply intended to convey that the change suggested did not involve or advocate a sanguinary reformation, but rather a mental or intellectual one. The proclamation would be prepared and issued by the representatives of a nation-wide organisation for the implementing of NATIONAL ACTION, after the book had been widely propagated and discussed. The third part of the quotation aimed merely at emphasising the desire that young and comparatively young persons, possessing the initiative, courage and vigour of youth, should come forward and take their proper place in the Councils of the Nation, rather than staid and over-cautious elderlies, stained, perhaps, by the inevitable consequences of bitter, party, political strife.

The solution will be found, with God's help, if and when the majority of those people who place their country's interests first—Farmers, Labourers, Educationalists, Business People, Industrialists, Professionals—will band themselves together for this nationally vital work. If these will unite on National Action—and since they practically all support it in principle there is no tenable reason why they should not—they can get any reform that they may demand in an organised way, in spite of any form of vested interests that may attempt to block the road.

A very simple method, for example, by which the change could be achieved, and to which no persons or party could reasonably object, would be an organised national demand for a Referendum on the question of adopting National



Action. But here again the first stage of execution is widespread propagation and study. Every person will agree that National Action, or a practical modification of it, cannot be put into operation, by any legitimate means, until this is accomplished. This is logical, and this first step, therefore, towards successful application, is the work that lies immediately before us. This is the part of the work that well-disposed people are called on to do. Then, and only then, will the necessity for a decision on the implementation of National Action arise.

Some critics, again, while agreeing with the plan, if it could be executed, assert that it is idealistic and Utopian in concept. The journal, *Irish Industry*, representing various industrial interests in this country, and with close on eight hundred Irish manufacturers behind it, should, I suggest, be accepted as being sufficiently realistic to answer this charge. Here is what *Irish Industry* says about NATIONAL ACTION in its February issue: "It is a reasoned plea for the adoption of a planned economy for the whole nation. It points out, in an incontrovertible manner, the inherent faults in our present hotch-potch economy founded on a foreign base. . . . This little book brings us back to fundamentals. It has no room for hypocrisy. The man who pays lip service to Irish nationality in one aspect, and does his utmost to kill it in another, finds the mirror held up before him so that he can see himself in all his garments of hypocrisy. . . . We cannot do better than suggest the widest possible circulation and study of this booklet. Then when the day comes, as it must, if this nation is to survive, our people will be ready to put the policy or plan outlined in NATIONAL ACTION into operation."

*Irish Industry* is a practical, business journal having little time for chimerical fancy. No sensible person would be foolish enough to believe that "by waving a fairy wand over the country" he would get all the people to unite on "an agreed national policy," or, in fact, get all the people to agree on anything. But this can be asserted with truth and knowledge—that here is a national plan to which almost a hundred per cent. of its non-vested-interest readers already extend, in principle, their approval. Here is a prac-



tical, workable plan to which every Irish man and woman, who place national above private, sectarian or party interests, can subscribe. It is the only comprehensive national plan, as far as I am aware, that, without involving the establishment or maintenance of a political party, has ever been offered to the Irish people.

Is it seriously asserted, or agreed to, then, that in spite of all that has been done and said and written, we, as a nation, have not sufficient cohesion, organising power, national will or moral courage to carry through a plain, practical, common sense, easily understandable plan of unity and national recovery, with practically only those who have unnatural, selfish vested interests, alien outlook, or servile fear, to oppose us?

It will be of very little practical value to agree with this plan, in principle, and do nothing more. Many persons have become so sceptical, so cynical and so devoid of hope, as a result of our present systems, that they are not prepared to do anything. This attitude shows neither a good Christian nor a good civic spirit. We must have Christian Hope. If you believe that National Action is right, play your part in its propagation.

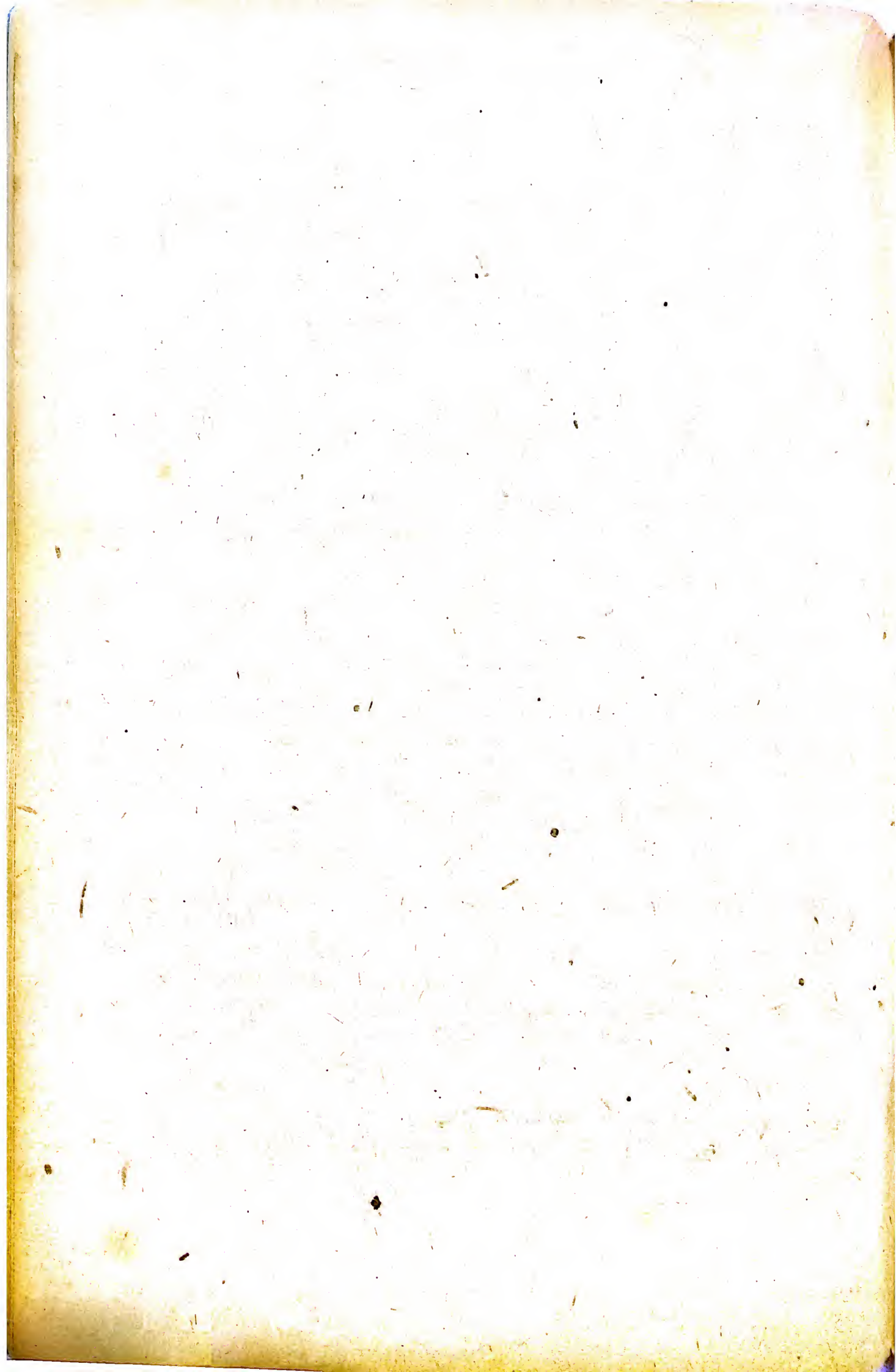
To reiterate, neither the author nor the publishers will profit from the production or sale of NATIONAL ACTION. One of the best immediate ways in which you can exercise your share of national service is by constituting yourself in some effective way, an agent for its distribution and study, and getting your friends to do likewise. This is National Action, and the time has come for every good citizen, no matter what his station in life may be, to become a National Actionist, and thereby to play a full and appropriate part in this great and noble work.

By national unity, national good will, national organisation, and forthright, selfless national co-operation, the possibilities for this country's future—Spiritual, Cultural, Economic and International—are, in proportion to its size, gigantic. Then, in God's Name, let us, in unity and strength, turn our eyes, our will, and our energy, before it is too late, towards this, our National Ideal.

AUTHOR.

*August, 1943.*







## PREFACE

The object of this work is to formulate, in outline, a plan for a National Government for this country, together with revised or reorganised public systems and services. The present system of government, and some of the chief public systems and factors of national reconstruction, are briefly examined and practical recommendations and suggestions made.

Since all the important features of national recovery are not dealt with, it must not be assumed that because some are omitted their importance is thereby overlooked. To treat adequately of all of these, or indeed to deal fully with even those that are cited, would require a great deal of space, raise many controversial issues, and would, moreover, only tend to confuse and unbalance the central theme.

The factors which are introduced should be sufficient to show that our present major systems are unsound, that from them there is little hope of either great or good results, and that they must, therefore, be radically revised.

It is fully realised that in attempting to outline, in such small space, a plan for the solution of what is, for us, a big and complex undertaking, one is open to all kinds of mis-interpretation, destructive criticism and slander. Fair-minded persons should see in it an unbiased attempt to offer a practical plan, which will enable us to recover from our present unsatisfactory national condition, and will thereby help us to solve the most vital of all our problems—the preservation and progress of the Irish nation.

As far as I am aware, no such plan for the national rehabilitation of Ireland has heretofore been presented. It is very simple, but it is at least a foundation on which to build. I know of no country in which a similar plan has been advanced or adopted. This need not discourage us. Wholesale imitation does not appear to have carried us very far.



Some people may consider themselves disillusioned by all the reverses we have had. We must face the future, whatever it may hold for us, with fortitude and Christian Faith, and with hope in what is left of the Irish people in our own land. If we can appreciate this situation, we must determine to re-start from the very foundation.

The task which lies before this generation in Ireland is literally colossal. Political freedom, the undoing of the outrage of Partition, cultural emancipation and the speedy accomplishment of economic and social reconstruction, call for national faith, enthusiasm, sincerity, common sense and sustained energy to a degree never before equalled or approached.

Nations to-day are vying, under the banner of Mammon, for ultra-modern superiority. We can show to the world that ultra-modern development can be achieved, and achieved successfully, under the Banner of Christ.

Gaelic Ireland saved Europe for Civilisation and Christianity before the Middle Ages. Our duty now, and our only hope for a national future, lies in making Ireland once again, not only free but Gaelic, not only Gaelic but a missionary power and example of practical Christianity in the only way that twentieth century scepticism will heed it—a successful example of an exemplary Christian State.

Will Young Ireland accept the challenge of this great and heroic task, to brace itself, in unity and Faith, for a glorious future ; or will it continue its downward course, through national idleness, foreign imitation and social slavery, towards inevitable national defeat ?

Having seen what our people did, and were prepared to do, in 1916-21 without being well organised, I believe that this rising generation will respond, and in this belief, in the Name of God and of Ireland, I call upon enlightened young men and women, from "The Four Green Fields," to rally round National Action.

Neither the author nor the publishers desire to profit from the production or sale of this book. They offer it to Ireland for what it is worth.



## INTRODUCTION

Most people who think seriously realise that there is something fundamentally wrong with our way of life in this country. Our population is going down ; the revival of our language and culture is not progressing as it should ; and our social and economic systems have proved to be nationally unsound. These results are contrary to what we should have expected. With a good soil and a favourable climate, that we should have a falling population is also contrary to the natural and economic laws of both God and man.

There are many other outstanding indications of national decay, but these that are cited—and they are universally substantiated around us—are sufficiently grave in themselves to justify investigation, and, above all, to call for the planning and the application of practical remedies.

There is no specific factor which would fully account for all this. The causes are deep and comprehensive. The remedy must be deep and comprehensive also. The basic cause, or combination of causes, of our present unsatisfactory condition, is that all our major national systems are fundamentally unsound and unco-ordinated.

These unsound systems and their consequences would sooner or later demoralise and undermine the national outlook of almost any individual. We have thousands of examples of this to-day—persons who had an Irish outlook and desire, but whose national morale has been gradually undermined by a flood of negative, pagan and other influences almost unchecked. The result is that many have become sceptical, pessimistic and cynical.

On the establishment of the Irish Free State Government, twenty years ago, practically all our present systems were taken over from English control. They were continued substantially as England had made them, and, manifestly, these systems were not designed for our national good. Attempts were made, no doubt, to improve them in various ways, but systems which are radically wrong cannot be corrected unless they are radically changed. No serious attempt to do this appears to have been made.



One of the usual accompaniments of any form of depression, weakness or confusion, is unbridled criticism. When things are not going well, people are always prepared to criticise abundantly, even though they may not be acquainted with all the facts, or able to suggest a useful remedy. Any person, with little intellectual effort, can pour destructive criticism on almost anything. It is a different matter to criticise constructively, and without malice, for the purpose of improving and attempting to build up. A person who offers practical, constructive alternatives realises some of the difficulties at least, and makes allowances for them. The gossiping scare-monger, the alarmist, or the deliberate slanderer, shoulders no such responsibility. Comprehending all this, we shall set out with the aim of striving to show how the structure of our way of life might be greatly improved. In this process we must necessarily criticise; in attempting to shape a practical plan we must be candid also. The position for the nation is too serious to admit of anything else. Furthermore, this criticism is entirely objective, with no desire to hurt or offend anyone.

The re-building of our nation twenty years ago was started under supreme difficulties, which most people at that time did not fully realise. Those difficulties were the result of subversive, foreign mis-government for hundreds of years. Along with this, or rather because of it, we had to suffer the truncation of our country against the wishes of the vast majority of our people, and the cruel affliction of civil war. It is only in years to come that we shall fully realise the appalling hindrances in the way of national recovery, that these circumstances imposed. To grapple with such great obstacles we copied a most cumbersome and inefficient form of government—the Political Party System.

Bearing these facts in mind, we have probably fared as well in the last twenty years as any other people would have done in like circumstances. We have made some serious mistakes, the cardinal one being the adoption of the Party Political System of Government. We also have made strides forward in many directions, but the progress



we have achieved is not at all sufficient to enable us to face with confidence a future, torn by war and its consequences, and by all the other repercussions of unchristian disorganisation which are rampant throughout the world to-day.

One of the first things we must recognise is that the entire life, civilisation, individuality and economy of any country, spiritually and materially, form, nationally speaking, one great, collective whole. All our major problems are parts of one great, national problem—the establishment and maintenance of the nation. This is elementary reasoning, yet, as a result of our tragic history, we are unbalanced in our national outlook. We do not appear to have completely grasped this vital basic fact so far. Different groups have been attempting to solve different, and indeed sometimes similar problems, without securing, or attempting to secure, the organised assistance of other groups, equally intent on attempting to solve other national difficulties. In fact, different organisations are sometimes actively opposed to one another, consciously or not, in their respective efforts.

We are all only too familiar with the series of organisations which, having started, flourished for a time and failed. So persistent has this procession been that many people use this argument to emphasise, what they term, the instability and fickleness of the Irish character. The true explanation is, that the very restriction and incompleteness of these efforts foretold their failure.

In addition to this want of unity in organisation, there are many thousands of people, without restriction, hindering our efforts, by opposition, destructive criticism and default. The result of all this tends to divide the efforts of the nation rather than to unite them. We must understand this situation clearly, and face it, because our present condition, in the period of world depression and unrest which confronts us both at present and in the future, may easily lead to national defeat. Many people are prepared to agree with all this provided they are not asked to do anything themselves. In the old political days "The Harp," "The Green Flag" and "The



Shamrock " covered a multitude of national sins and omissions. "A Chara," "Mise le meas" and "Eire" are equally effective substitutes to-day. This kind of humbug and dissimulation is steadily gaining ground. Its demoralising influences are gradually being accepted and its calamitous consequences are in the offing. It is the inevitable result of national confusion, and the wilful abandonment of our own ideals, characteristics and traditions.

It is evident now, looking back over the past twenty years, that when we started to rebuild our nation we had no definite, all-embracing, national plan. We obviously muddled along, from year to year, patching incessantly, but never rising to the bigger and more heroic task of national reconstruction as a whole. The policy which will successfully serve to reverse this position must be comprehensive, forthright and sincere.

We require an amount of detailed national discipline and direction in this country. Unbridled freedom to do as we like in most things is not liberty; it is rather the prelude to national anarchy. We must be compelled, if necessary, to do many things which we may dislike, or be restrained from doing many things which we may like; but, so long as disciplined organisation is accompanied by sincerity, common sense, charity and justice to all, we have no real cause of complaint. Democracy means government by the representatives of the people; government means discipline, and Christian discipline means ordered organisation for the common good. His Holiness Pope Pius XI described the correct attitude of governments towards national life as "directing, supervising, restraining." Christian Social Teaching assigns a threefold task to the State—namely, to establish an ordered social community; to look after the poorer paid workers; and to secure a wide diffusion of private property and ownership.

The crying need for the practical application of these simple principles is manifest; but, simple though they be, they can be effectively applied in no other way than by means of an all-embracing National Recovery Plan.



## CHAPTER I

### National Organisation and National Action

From all the evidence one can gather about other countries, and from a wide knowledge of our own, it would appear that ours is one of the most nationally non-organised countries in Western Europe. This does not imply that we are backward, rude, deficient in culture, or inferior in physical or intellectual attainments of any kind. Taking circumstances into account, we compare very favourably with any country in these ways. National organisation is a different matter; it means the extent to which we are nationally combined and federated, and the degree of efficiency of that combination, to carry on to the best advantage as a distinctive community. It means co-operation by individuals and associations for the common good. But while unity and organisation are the keynotes to success, they can also be the road to national disaster. National organisation on rightful lines might be claimed as a heaven-sent boon; on wrong—say on pagan principles—it would be, indeed, a veritable scourge.

With the exception of the Gaelic League, and a very few other associations, all the forms of non-militant organisation, which have been carried on in this country in the past fifty years, have been either political or class organisations of one kind or another. In a country circumstanced as ours is national disunion of this kind constitutes a deadly evil. It should, therefore, be regarded with national disfavour. All serious causes of disunion should be eliminated and forces working for cohesion fostered by every legitimate means in our power. National organisation is the keystone of our future, and the way it is used will be the measure of our success.



## NATIONALISM AS AN ORGANISING FORCE

Nationalism and politics have been closely associated in Ireland; they are consequently greatly confounded. This condition might, indeed, be claimed as a primary cause of our present national confusion. The absence or weakness of national spirit, or true Christian nationality, is a great indirect cause of national disunion.

Christian nationalism means that, subordinate to the Law of God, the nation, or the country, is the highest and the most worthy natural social unit into which men and families are grouped. It embraces all the attributes, spiritual and material, which enshrine the individuality and the freedom of a people and their country as a distinct whole: in fact, the entire heritage handed down to us by our ancestors. It includes not only the language, tradition, culture, history, music, games, and customs of the country, but every other phase of national life that strengthens the existence and advancement of the nation as a whole. It associates the people with the land from which they have sprung and with which the clay of their ancestors is mingled. In actual practice nationalism coincides with good Christian citizenship.

It is the privilege, and even the duty of a Government, to do everything that it legitimately can within the bounds of Christian Teaching for national development and preservation. Towards this end Christian nationality is one of the most powerful sources of organisation, unity and strength. On the other hand, one of the greatest causes of ultimate national disintegration is the perversion or negation of this world force.

Subject to Christianity, nationality exercises one of the greatest and most ennobling influences on the human race. It was the force which inspired Pearse, Ashe and MacSwiney, and the hosts of other men and women who gave their lives for their country; and it was the moral force which called a halt to the gigantic power of Britain in 1921. It has inspired many of man's greatest achievements and noblest heroism; it is also one of the strongest weapons which any nation can call to its aid, against



internal disunion, lassitude or greed. It is the force which inspires men and women willingly to give their best in service for their country's sake ; and it is the force that will save our own nation if it is to live.

Our concept of the noble virtue of patriotism, which is instinctively present in almost every human breast, is devotion to one's country, in accordance with Christ's Law. In other words, it is Christian nationalism. Patriotism is placed high in the hierarchy of national virtues and is by many theologians considered equal if not superior in obligation to private or family ties. "After his duties towards God," wrote St. Thomas Aquinas, "man owes most to his parents and his country." (*Summa, Secunda Secundae*, Article 1.) And, again, "It behoves the virtuous citizen to expose himself to the danger of death for the public weal of the State" (*Ibid.* Article 5). Cardinal Mercier, late Primate of Belgium, wrote : "Family interests, class interests, party interests, and the material good of the individual, take their place in the scale of values below the ideal of patriotism." Pope Leo XIII stressed the same point : "The natural law enjoins us to love devoutly and to defend the land that gave us birth and upbringing, so that good citizens do not hesitate to face death for their native land" (*Sapientiae Christianae*).

If such be the Christian concept, why seek out spurious definitions of nationalism ? Why not call perversions by their proper names ? Placing duty to the State or to the nation as being equal to, or above, our duty to God, or what is termed "blind worship of the State," is merely paganism. The famous American phrase, "My country right or wrong," is another form of the same fallacy.

What is called "extreme or exaggerated nationalism" is another bogey nowadays often advanced. People forget that if nationalism becomes exaggerated or extreme, it is no longer nationalism, but something else. They also appear to forget that if nationalism is guided by Christian principles, it cannot become either exaggerated or extreme. Because idolatry or paganism in varied forms, or robbery, invasion and murder have masqueraded as true nationalism, why should it prevent us here under a National Govern-



ment from developing and using this God-given force for national stability and advance? Christ's Church and Teachings have been maligned, misused and misrepresented all over the earth, but these perversions are not advanced by Christians as other interpretations of His Teaching, or as reasons for their rejection.

Ireland is one of the most Christian countries in the world. Our nationalism cannot, therefore, become exaggerated so long as we are Christian, for exaggerated nationalism means nationalism that is doctrinally unsound. The term was applied to certain European countries where false national conceptions arose; but why apply it here, where we have very little true developed nationalism and where any nationalism we have is not doctrinally unsound because it is Christian? Neither is it diplomatically exaggerated because we have no imperial designs. Highly developed nationalism here can have no irritating international implications, because it means simply the rightful advancement of local integrity and independence, fostered within the great framework of Christianity. Just as we are distinctive by being national, so we wish to co-operate amicably with all other nations in harmony and peace.

Then why all this playing with words? Why all this anxiety about exaggerated or extreme nationalism in a country where, in present circumstances, and under our present systems, true Christian nationalism is in grave danger of dying out altogether? Why, in a country where mere trimmings and phrases are being accepted for the true substance, do well-meaning people warn us against exaggeration, or why must strivings for normal rights and conditions be called extreme? Referring to this very thing, Rev. Dr. Duggan, former Bishop of Clonfert, said: "They are called extremists; they are extremists because they are extremely right."

The civil war and its sickening backwash left us weak and divided, and so party political Governments in the past twenty years have deliberately shirked this vital issue. The consequence is that in this, as in most other



things, we appear fearful of ourselves, of our own ideals, and of our resources.

True Christian nationality is not a force for brave or honest men to fear. It is rather a great national, God-given organising agent that can be forged into a vital element of our National Recovery Plan. Salazar in Portugal relied on nationalism based on Christian Social Teaching, and has proved it a practical success. Instead of fearing nationalism, because it has been distorted elsewhere, and mis-interpreted by many of our people, we should set ourselves the more manly and courageous task of proving to the world that true nationalism, rightly directed, can be made, what God intended it to be, a source of unity, strength and hope, in any land which strives sincerely to maintain His Law.

### PARTITION

The problem of Partition is a vital one in Ireland to-day. This Partition against the wishes of the vast majority of the Irish people is one of the chief problems which calls for the establishment of a National Government. Weak political governments are not in a position to face the task of removing Partition.

On the occasion of the coming of American troops to the Six Counties in January, 1942, Mr. de Valera made the following statement as reported in the Press:—  
“Everyone knows that Ireland was partitioned twenty years ago and that the Six Counties have been cut off from the rest of the country by an Act of the British Parliament, despite the expressed will of the Irish people.

“When the United States was entering the last war, President Wilson declared that America meant to fight for democracy, and for the right of peoples to national self-determination. The Irish people took him at his word, and in the general elections of December, 1918, by an overwhelming vote—more than three for the one against—declared for national independence and for the establishment of a Republic. The decision was reaffirmed,



after two years of conflict with Britain, in the general elections of 1921, when the partition candidates returned were again less than one-fourth of the total representation.

"Nevertheless the British Government cut the nation in two and set up a separate Parliament for six of the thirty-two counties. These six counties formed no natural, historic, or geographical entity. The area was chosen solely with a view to securing a majority within it for the anti-national minority. In one half of the area—including the city of Derry and the whole territory adjoining the boundary with the Twenty-six Counties—a majority of the inhabitants were against partition.

"To partition the territory of an ancient nation is one of the cruellest wrongs that can be committed against a people. The partition of Ireland is, in essence, no different from the former partition of Poland, nor are the evils that flow from it less in kind than those Abraham Lincoln foresaw from the projected partition of the United States, when he determined to prevent it even at the cost of fighting one of the bitterest civil wars in history.

"It is our duty to make it clearly understood that no matter what troops occupy the Six Counties the Irish people's claim for the union of the whole of the national territory, and for supreme jurisdiction over it, will remain unabated. The maintenance of the partition of Ireland is as indefensible as aggressions against small nations elsewhere, which it is the avowed purpose of Great Britain and the United States in this war to bring to an end."

The case for national self-determination has been made a hundred times during the present war in grand proclamations all over the world, but, in spite of all these protestations, it will probably require the efforts of a united people to shame and force the authors into the local application of these high-sounding words. Partition will be solved by our own unity, work and perseverance, rather than by the good-will of those who loudly profess fair play for all when their own lands are in danger. Appreciating all this, while we must carefully plan the profitable cultivation of the "Three Green Fields" we have got, we must also carefully plan, in unity, faith



and courage, for the national recovery of "The Fourth Green Field."

### SECRET SOCIETIES AND ALIENS

Among the most pernicious agencies of national disunion in any self-governing country are secret organisations. Such bodies usually organise to promote the material well-being of their members as against the welfare of the community as a whole. Over ninety per cent. of the population of the Twenty Six Counties portion of this country that is controlled by the Irish Government are precluded by their profession of Faith from forming, or being members of, secret organisations. If sections of the community, therefore, are allowed by law to form secret organisations against the vast majority of the people, they are given undue advantages, from which the majority, individually and as a body, are completely debarred.

Irish people are almost foolishly liberal in their business and trade relations. Groups or sections that organise themselves financially or otherwise against them acquire, therefore, tremendous advantages, out of all proportion to their numbers. It would appear that aliens, particularly of a certain class, take decided steps to ensure that the great bulk of the capital which falls into their hands does not again revert to the Irish people, except in unavoidable circumstances. The rapidity by which aliens are accumulating property in this country would pointedly indicate the existence of some such financial understanding.

Infiltration of aliens, who automatically become entitled to the same rights as Irish citizens, and who are possibly backed from abroad by powerful international financial organisations, must also be firmly dealt with, before the consequences create serious trouble for us, as well as for themselves.

As one of the initial steps of National Action, a National Government must deal firmly with aliens and undesirable infiltration, as well as with the suppression of secret societies.



## POLITICS

Party Politics has been one of the most serious causes of national disunion in this country for generations, and is as destructively potent to-day as ever before. It has been responsible for a tremendous amount of national harm. Politics has proved a failure in this country because it was organised on party lines. It is one of the basic reasons why our linguistic, economic, and other national efforts have proved a partial failure also.

In a country, nationally united, whose civilisation has been working normally, and fairly smoothly, for a long time, and where a tradition of self-government is well established, Party Politics is usually not taken too seriously; but where national unity is weak or lacking, where the essential elements of national freedom have been for a long time suppressed, and where a section of the people are either hostile to, or apathetic towards, national recovery, then, indeed, Party Politics can become a vital menace to the well-being, and even to the very existence, of the State.

The Party Political System, which we imitated, suited England well enough in the peaceful days before the great World Wars. When serious trouble overtakes such a country, her people immediately close their ranks and drop the Party Political System during the time of crisis. Witness the contrast in our case when national issues such as Partition, the enactment of the present Constitution, Wheat, or the Land Annuities arose. These were all purely national questions, but Political Parties fought them out to the bitter end, to the great and permanent damage of the nation.

Apart from the present unanimity on national defence it would be difficult to find one instance of national agreement on a major issue since the establishment of the Party Political System of Government. Were it not for this agreement on national defence, the country would probably have been invaded in the early years of the second Great War. This should be a salutary lesson for us in the future.



History will probably record that the national unpreparedness of several European countries in recent years, and the collapse of France in the second Great War, are directly traceable to internal party political strife.

In the north-east of Ireland party politics—masquerading under a very thin and easily detected religious cloak—has been, and is to-day, the root cause of disunion there. No person, who takes the trouble to acquaint himself with the facts, believes that minorities are in any danger of religious oppression or victimisation, either from the Irish Government or from the Catholic people. There is absolute religious freedom and toleration in the Twenty Six Counties, as the representatives of religious minorities have frequently testified. There has been no complaint against religious freedom since the Irish Government was established. Yet the Government of the Six Counties utilises Protestant and other forms of religion, in that part of Ireland, for the purpose of bolstering up, what one of their Ministers was recently pleased to call—“A Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people.” It might be pointed out that all the religious minorities (non-Catholics) in the Six Counties, taken together, comprise only slightly over fifty per cent. of the entire population of the area. It is in the North-East of Ireland that religious bigotry originated in this country and has mainly flourished. This national evil can be effectively destroyed there only by the undoing of Partition and the elimination of the Party Political System.

Under the Party System the theoretical function of a Political Opposition is to criticise constructively, or oppose legislative proposals, and thereby to prevent faulty legislation reaching the Statute Book. In political practice there is a great temptation to do otherwise, to manufacture questionable, imaginary or hypothetical arguments and opposition, so as to hold legislation up to odium and contempt, even after it has become law. Judging by some of our legislation and the mutilation which apparently sound proposals often suffer at the hands of the Opposition for apparently no practical constructive reason, one is sometimes inclined to ask



if the Opposition is striving to improve Government proposals, by sincere opposition and criticism, or rather to damage the prestige and authority of the Government in the eyes of the people? The Opposition will, in fact, when it gets into power, sometimes re-introduce proposals which it opposed bitterly when in opposition. These are some of the means adopted in practice by which the Opposition hopes to advance its chances of getting into power. But all this is no aspersion on the integrity of the Opposition. It is the ordinary working of the Party Political System. Any other set of people, placed in similar circumstances, would probably do the same. Like other such systems, Party Politics places its adherents in circumstances over which they have, personally, very little control.

Under these conditions, and from all the political battering that legislative proposals receive, by the time they reach the Statute Book they are often attenuated compromises, criticised, slandered and ridiculed, merely for political party ends, by nearly half the community—that is, by the Opposition and its supporters, by half the Press, and by nearly half the elected representatives in Dáil and Seanad. How could legislation, in such circumstances, no matter how well framed or intended, be a sweeping success?

A further serious weakness of the Party System is that it limits considerably the choice or selection. Parliament is the most important business in the country; the best and most suitable persons available should, therefore, be selected to conduct its work. Under the Party Political System to be elected to the Dáil, a person must usually be a politician, and of fairly long standing. To be selected for a Ministerial position he must also belong to the victorious political party. In this way some excellent representatives are automatically ruled out from the most vital offices of the State.

It is, I believe, correct to say that under the Party Political System, wherever it exists, a private monopoly of money directs and controls political policy to a sub-



stantial extent. Through the Press "money" directs financial, and also, of course, political, opinion into the semblance of public opinion, and thereby renders democratic government, in some countries, a misnomer. Political Parties, which are strong enough, aim to control—or at least to influence—a section of the public Press. This section will then usually support them whether their party actions are always nationally defensible or not. In this way Party Politics usually tend to deteriorate, so that intrigue, caucus-gang organisation, favouritism, canvassing, confusion, corruption of national thought and action, and misleading propaganda have followed Party Politics all over the world.

Public appointments and Party Politics have been closely related here and elsewhere for the past two hundred years. There is a considerable suspicion amongst the public that this association has not yet been completely eliminated. Canvassing for appointments, laxity in public honesty, want of respect for authority, and for the legitimate rights and property of people, and other forms of civic weakness, are directly traceable to a combination of causes, for which Party Politics is collectively responsible. The combined result of this is that no section of our people is playing its part as it should.

Plausible arguments in favour of the Party Political System can, no doubt, be advanced; but in practice it has proved a failure everywhere. In business organisation this system is never adopted. If a body of farmers or other business men, for example, want a committee to manage a creamery or other enterprise, they elect members who will carry out a fixed policy. They don't select three or four groups with as many different plans. Bodies like County and Urban Councils and Corporations, which adopt the example of Parliament, and elect on the "Party Ticket," have not been a great success either.

Why, then, should a Government be elected on this or that side-issue rather than to protect and maintain the integrity and progress of the nation as a whole? Why must the most important business in the country be



carried on by a system which is thoroughly discredited all over the world, which has helped to bring trouble and disunion to this country time and again, and which no other business, more serious than a students' debating society, in any country, would nowadays adopt?

Parnell was speaking nationally when he exclaimed that "No man has a right to fix the boundary to the march of a nation." After Parnell's time, political strife and confusion prevailed, until Pearse and his companions, in their anger and despair, rose in 1916 and in one week cleared—with the sacrifice of their lives—the national issue between England and this country. The General Elections of 1918 completed the rout of Political Parties from the Irish field, leaving one truly national party, virtually composed of the 1916 survivors, to complete the national struggle.

If this national representation had remained intact, there is little doubt but that the freedom of this country would have been long since completely established. A civil war unfortunately intervened, bringing about, amongst other tragic results, the re-establishment of Political Parties.

Had politics continued to function as in England, and in most other countries of the world in which the Political Party System of Government persists, politics might not have proved quite so baneful. We were apparently over anxious to show to the world that we were ultra-democratic, and more than fair to small minorities. So we established the most party-political of all political systems—Proportional Representation.

No country in the world, in our circumstances, has adopted the Proportional Representation System. Any country with its institutions and its cultural and economic life well established is no good example in this respect for a nation struggling to regain its very language and even portion of its national territory.

This system requires big constituencies. It gives representation to every substantial party in each constituency, whether their national outlook is subversive or not. The



practical outcome of Proportional Representation in this country is that weak Governments, with a small working majority, opposed by coalitions, composed of all kinds of minor parties, have been, and probably will always be, elected. This is the very type of Government, in a country situated as we are, that is least desirable or effective. A Government with a small working majority, in such circumstances, under the Political Party System, expends half its time and energy in combating the—sometimes apparently irresponsible—tactics of the Political Opposition.

Why should we depart from common world practice in this matter? Why should we arrange to give special representation to scattered minorities, such as would not be given in any other country? What special representation is extended to minorities in Britain? Irish settlers and their descendants, for example, are as well entitled to representation in Britain or the United States as British settlers and their descendants are here. The Liverpool, Mersey or Tyne-side Irish get no representation beyond what they are able to secure in straight-vote elections. Why, then, should scattered minorities get special representation here?

World affairs move far too quickly now for the cumbersome, slow and oftentimes discreditable activities of this out-dated system. Party Politics and Proportional Representation have proved a failure in this country during the past twenty years. The only hope for our national recovery must be based on national unity, and Party Politics will never accomplish this. The only effective way to secure unity therefore is to eliminate Proportional Representation and Party Politics, and all other serious sources of national disunion.



## CHAPTER II

## A Plan for the National Recovery of Ireland

If it is agreed, as I assert it must be agreed, that Party Politics has proved a failure, and if the Party Political System is incapable of being radically improved, then some practical alternative to the present system of government must be introduced. Two simple but very comprehensive systems suggest themselves. These are (a) a Dictatorship, or (b) a National Government, combined with a well-organised system of Parish Guilds and Councils. This latter will be explained hereafter.

Many persons assert that we require a Dictator in this country; this is a very easy solution. A Dictator will be expected to solve everything; but Dictators are not found or selected. They usually find and select themselves. They then impose their will on a country for better or worse. Dictators have a tendency to fall away from the narrow path promulgated on the Mount, and to become imperialistic or tyrannical. It is the one who becomes a tyrant who will see to it that he is not removed. Moreover, when a Dictator vacates his office, or is overthrown, the country may be plunged into greater confusion than ever. The right type of Dictator is very rare; the wrong type is very dangerous; however, if we can get the right type well and good for the time being.

Leaders we will, with God's help, produce in the future, as we have done in the past. There may be one in the making now in the minor by-ways of our life. If so he will have advantages extended to no other Irish leader since before the reign of Brian Boru. As far as can be judged he may not be crushed or destroyed by external forces, like most of his predecessors, or literally torn to shreds by internal Party Political strife. He will also have the experience of the past twenty years to guide him.



When Pearse and his compatriots attempted to liberate this country, they did not adopt a Party Political Programme, which they probably felt would only end in failure. The Dáil resulting from the 1918 elections discarded the Party Political System also and formed a National Government, and a National Government now would be one elected by the nation to carry out a national programme, promulgated and explained beforehand. A Coalition, representing different Political Parties is not a National Government but merely a party political compromise, or temporary arrangement between Political Parties.

To institute this change demands nothing more drastic than a mental reformation. A very simple and easily understood National Proclamation might be prepared. It should embrace the following fundamental points, namely, that a Government freely elected by all the people over twenty-one years of age, might pledge itself to strive sincerely towards the following ends:—

1. The absolute independence of Ireland.
2. The dominant establishment of our National Language and Culture.
3. The establishment of a sound National Economic and Financial System.
4. The fair and equitable stabilisation of Labour.
5. The maintenance of Christianity.

This is merely a re-assertion of the national objective of Pearse and his associates, but while they were forced to offer their lives, we can proceed in peace to re-establish their aim. The great difference between conditions then and now is, that while their programme was easily enunciated—"To break the political connection with England"—we are called upon to prepare and to execute a practical plan for the running of the country. This practical application of Pearse's ideal has not yet been developed.

This does not mean that we must live an isolated national life, but that we shall live our own life, absorbing from outside whatever we may find to our national advantage. It does not mean that platitudes may serve as duty to



the National Cause, but that sincere and practical effort will. It does not mean that a National Government will do everything to implement National Economy or to organise Society, while we merely criticise and ask why they don't do this or that. It does not mean that Labour may rule the State any more than other sections of the Community, and it does not mean that mere talk and trifling may replace precept and example.

All the present Political Parties, including militant Republicans, should be able to subscribe to this, because they all profess to support, and stand for, it already. If any Party rejects this plan, or a practical modification of it, it should at least advance another which will be more promising than proved political stagnation, a Labour Utopia, or senseless militant futility.

Having framed a comprehensive National Programme such as is outlined hereafter, based on the Proclamation, we will require some suitable young persons to carry it out. They must be strong, selfless, enthusiastic and persevering, and they must show by example that they are sincere in word and deed. . . . That such young persons are available I have no doubt.

The election for the new Dáil would be very much on the lines of elections before the introduction of Proportional Representation. Candidates would be nominated in each constituency by the people. There would be one vital difference, namely, that instead of two or more policies, with some good points in each, being submitted to constituents, they would be called on merely to elect the best man or woman they could find to carry out the agreed national policy. We can hardly visualise the far-reaching national advantages which this difference would bring. It would immediately destroy a great amount of local opposition, bitterness, and confusion, and it would wash away for ever one of the most corroding and ever-weakening sources of national disunion in this country—political strife. It would save a great amount of valuable time wasted at present in Dáil and Seanad in futile speeches, argument and repartee; and prevent the demoralising consequences of all this bickering, on



deputies themselves, as well as on the people. It would direct instead our undivided strength and attention, for the first time in modern history, towards the building up of our own country in our own way.

This plan is suggested as something to adopt, or to modify. It matters little how a National Government is secured, provided the method assures that a strong and efficient National Government, strongly national, will be established. To attain this, for example, a nominated element might be introduced.

According to legal information the Constitution provides that it can now be changed only by a Bill passed, or deemed to be passed, by Dáil and Seanad. After the passage of such a Bill a Referendum would determine whether the proposed changes should, or should not, be enacted. Parliament evidently did not visualise any request for a change in the Constitution coming from the people, without being initiated in the Dáil. Even in the circumstances, if legislative changes such as are herein envisaged were widely called for by the people, the Dáil and Seanad could not, democratically, resist such demands. These demands would be for a Bill and a Referendum for the elimination of Proportional Representation, and the implementing of this National Plan, or an approved modification.

The immediate consideration is to publish, propagate, and explain this plan, or the modification, to the general public. It will then be the duty of the people, constitutionally organised, to see that the necessary legislative changes are carried out.

It may be asserted that Political Parties would persist, and upset the whole working of the new Plan, by argument, abuse and obstruction. If the people are not able to exercise sufficient moral courage, energy and national action to prevent this, then, our days as a distinctive nation would appear to be numbered.

There are, of course, other and more complex forms of National Organisation, for example, the Corporative System. The Corporative idea means that people would be grouped for representation and other purposes according



to their vocations. It is intrinsically Christian, and has been embodied in several Papal Encyclicals. It aims at a body of vocational and inter-vocational institutions, based on Christian Social Teaching. Each group or guild would embrace all the people engaged in the particular vocation. It may assume different forms or even be imposed by the State. This is, undoubtedly, an admirable form of organisation, but it must not be confused with organised interests or sections of vocations, that study only their own point of view, rather than the common good.

Whatever way it may originate, Christian Corporate Organisation implies subordination to an organised State. Authoritative advocates of this form of organisation do not appear to envisage it as forming an Electoral College, or in any other way electing a National Government. They always imply that unification of Government, and loyalty to that Government exist. This is very important, because we have not yet got that national unity and loyalty which, for Corporative Organisation, is ordinarily presupposed. It must not be assumed, therefore, that in our circumstances Corporate Organisation would offer a sound or practical method for the election of Government. Neither can it take the place of the parish type of organisation. Ireland is not vocationally organised, and there would I fear, be little hope of this or any other such system succeeding here until we are nationally organised. The dividing of people into vocational groups might, at present, resolve itself into class distinctions and vocational jealousies. In other words, until we are nationally organised it would probably tend towards national disunion which we should, beyond all things in the future, aim to avoid.

But we must not place all our faith in systems alone. If we have not sincerity and the right spirit behind our systems, no matter how intrinsically good they may be, they will fail. Take the example of Portugal in the past ten or twelve years for instance, and contrast it, in some ways, with our own experiences in the past twenty years. In making comparisons with other countries it must always be remembered that conditions in those countries are very different from ours. Portugal is an Empire.



The Portuguese people were apparently not, in recent times, very well disciplined or organised, yet in a few years Dr. Salazar has revolutionised the Educational, Social and Economic Systems of the country. He has based his order and discipline on simplicity, honesty and Christian Social Teaching.

When he became Prime Minister in 1928, Salazar found in Portugal what we have now, cumbersome Departments and systems of all kinds under the Political Party System. He found Portugal poor and insolvent, that is in paper money. Instead of reducing his country to greater insolvency still by pursuing the usual and the easy method, of borrowing millions of money, he put his financial faith in simple economies—in the economic instinct of a good housewife, who lives within her means—backed by his own example and a Christian, national, co-operative spirit in the people. The revolution of 1910, which did away with the Monarchy, also banished the Cross. Because the Monarchy supported Catholicism, the Church was held responsible for many things for which, of course, the abuse of Christ's Teaching was really to blame. Salazar put the Crucifix back in the schools, and made the Cross once again the national symbol of the new Portugal, as a vital part of his plan for the rehabilitation of his country.

With faith, courage, common sense, and the backing of his people, who understood him, because he was simple and sincere, his plan worked like magic. As a result, Portugal is to-day an example to Europe of nationalism based on Christian Social Teaching put to the test, and not found wanting.

It cannot be over emphasised that the real keynote of this man's success was not dry Economy or dry Education, but the living spirit behind them, the spirit of national pride in his own land, and Christian Hope and Faith, which he awakened in the people by simplicity, sincerity and common sense. He expected all the people to economise, but he and his Government did the same themselves. Observers now inform us that, in a hundred ways, humbug and hypocrisy have been driven from Portuguese life by the simplicity, sincerity and example of its leader. Herein



lies the secret of his success, and herein lies the practical moral for us.

Simplicity does not appeal to us in this country; We have an inordinate regard for things that are complex, and which are often imperfectly understood, particularly if they come to us from abroad. Grandiose verbal embellishments are freely accepted, regardless of whether they contain anything valuable, or merely conceal a lot of emptiness, while the simple facts of life around us are often passed by in blankness and disdain.

The great advantage of this plain, practical plan is that it will enable us to carry out all the other necessary phases of national recovery. This is a tremendous possibility which will amply compensate for all the labour, organisation and sacrifice which its implementing entails.

This system represents a complete break-away from the Party Political one we have had since the political fight for the self government of Ireland took definite shape about a hundred years ago. O'Connell, Butt, Parnell and Redmond—all utilised the Political Party System in their endeavours to wrest from England some measure of fair treatment and Home Rule. Excepting force it was the only one open to them. They represented the vast majority of the Irish people and were virtually therefore in the circumstances a National Party. On the other hand, all the insurrections which took place, from the coming of the English down to the present day, aimed positively at the absolute political separation of this country from England—complete independence, which always was, and always will be our merest right. Home Rule aimed, directly, at least, at an Irish Government subordinate to the Parliament of Great Britain. There is an unfathomable difference between the two ideas.

#### PARISH COUNCILS.

A National Parliament, with no "Opposition," no criticism and no advice would not be complete. Obvious objections to such a scheme could reasonably be advanced. In addition to the National Parliament, or rather as a



complementary part of the National Scheme, there must be established throughout the country a system of Parish Guilds and Councils, to replace the present Political Opposition.

One of the greatest weaknesses in the present system of government is the fact that the people are not organised. The State, whose function should be largely that of legislation, is consequently forced to engage in all kinds of minor tasks which should rightly be undertaken by the people themselves, locally organised. The result is that the various Ministries, through the Civil Service, are fast becoming bureaucratic and consequently inefficient. There are opposing political groups ; but these groups or parties may often place political before national interests, and thus become more damaging than if the people were not organised at all. In fact, under the Party Political System it is practically impossible to organise the people for national purposes because of the hidden cleavages which political influence always introduces.

If we have courage and faith in ourselves, Parish Guilds and Councils should be as good and as practical a system of local organisation, in association with a National Government, as can otherwise be devised. The parish unit is, historically, traditionally, socially, and otherwise well established. Individuals in the parish unit would represent all classes of the community more fully than those of any other unit that could be formed, and this is exactly what we require. The parish is the next stage to the family in national organisation. The family is also the basic unit of Christianity. Permanent Parish Organisation has never before been tried by any Government in this country, but this need not necessarily dissuade us from adopting it.

Some years ago Father Hayes founded the organisation called Muintir na Tíre. The object of this organisation, as set out in its Constitution, is to promote the true welfare of Ireland—spiritual, national, cultural and material, by the application of Catholic Social Principles. Those principles are accepted generally, even by most non-Catholics, as embracing the universal social application of Christianity.



In Muintir na Tíre, the Parish Guild, embracing all the people of the parish who join the organisation, is the basic unit. The Parish Guild elects a Parish Council or Committee to represent it. Muintir na Tíre is then built up of Parish Councils, Diocesan Councils, Provincial Councils and a Central National Executive.

In addition to Parish Guilds there are Associate Guilds, for the purpose of including groups organised vocationally and otherwise. A Central Council, appointed annually, is the supreme governing body of the Association.

Under the new order this organisation might be adopted and modified, as the State Organisation, in conjunction with a National Government. Parish Guilds, automatically embracing all the people of each parish, might be established by the National Government. Each Parish Guild would then elect a Parish Council: Parish Councils would in turn, elect Diocesan and Provincial Councils. Finally the National Council built up from and representing the Parish Councils would act as constructive critic, helper and adviser to the National Government. While Diocesan and Provincial Councils will deal with Parish Councils and their work, County Managers will administer work and finances which pertain to the County as a whole.

It is for the nation to decide whether the Seanad, as at present or otherwise constituted, might be continued, or whether the Seanad might be abolished, and its duties, powers and responsibilities transferred to the National Council. If the Seanad is retained it might be elected by the Dáil and National Council combined. It is for the nation also to decide whether the Dáil might not be reduced to say sixty or eighty members.

While Parish Councils, elected by Parish Guilds, must be directly independent, they should be established, backed and financed to a limited extent by the State. They should be Statutory, in that they should have limited power, authority and responsibilities, to deal with local matters. Many benefits to the people could come through Parish Councils. They might replace several types of existing local committees and organisations, the aims of which in many cases overlap.



Lest in some instances the parish unit might be considered too small for certain purposes, it should be optional for two or more Parish Councils to co-operate if they and the National Executive so desire. Parishes in urban areas might be grouped in the same way to form Urban Councils, or Urban Councils might be established independently.

A Parish Council, elected by the Parish Guild, should be responsible to the people of the parish and to its own federation. All the officers attached to it, except perhaps the Secretary, should be honorary.

The usually accepted meaning of a Statutory Body in this country is that it should be responsible to some Department of State. This would not do. Immediately the new parish organisation became directly subordinate to Ministerial control, it would lose its primary strength and national value—independence. Parish Councils must be absolutely free from direct Government control, if they are to serve a useful, healthy purpose in association with a National Government. The general principle that State financial assistance implies direct State financial control must be waived. Another way by which this end might be attained would be to make the National Council only a Statutory Body, with powers to delegate authority and responsibility to the Parish and other Councils. In either case the National Council, as such, would be responsible to the Dáil.

Here are some examples of the duties and responsibilities which might be suggested, tentatively, for Parish Councils, in association with a National Government :—

1. The Parish Council should receive an annual sum to administer locally. The giving of this sum is important ; the size of it is not. The average amount of this grant would require to be carefully investigated and apportioned more or less inversely between rich and poor parishes. It might be comparatively small, at least in the beginning. It could be provided from National Revenue, or from the rates, or in other ways ; but this would not imply increased taxation. Under the new system national taxation could be very considerably



reduced, or if not, benefits from taxation should be greatly increased.

2. An amount of money is expended at present through "Doles" and Relief. This money could be more efficiently administered through Parish Councils, mainly in the shape of work, and helping people to help themselves.
3. Parish Councils should be made responsible for the care of graveyards, the beautifying of homesteads, and of the parish and other types of small public work.
4. Parish Councils should undertake the provision and the care of playing fields, swimming pools and so on, and their effective utilisation.
5. They should recommend applications for Old Age Pensions, Blind, and Widows' Pensions, and loans from the State Credit Society. They might, indeed, be expected to guarantee, to some extent, the applicants they recommend.
6. They should undertake the organisation of educational and other functions, such as local lectures, classes, etc., and assist Educational and other Bodies in their work. Parish Councils should play an active part in providing, extending and repairing schools and other public buildings. They should provide local labour and materials. In doing this the present enormous cost of such work would be greatly reduced. People would also then recognise more forcefully that these buildings were their own.
7. Parish Councils should formulate and recommend parish or joint parish schemes to Provincial Councils, Boards of Health, Agricultural Committees and other Bodies. To avoid friction or overlapping those Bodies might be elected by Parish Councils.
8. Parish Councils should undertake the administration of State Aid, or Home Assistance, and provide food and fuel for helpless, necessitous families or persons.
9. They should co-operate with State Departments in carrying out Drainage, Afforestation, and other



large scale public schemes, and even carry out small schemes of this character themselves.

10. The State should provide a number of Parish Organisers, who would be placed at the disposal of the National Executive of Parish Councils. These Organisers would supervise and organise the work of Parish Councils and report to the National Executive. In this way, and also through Diocesan and Provincial Councils, the National Executive would be able to keep in touch with Parish Councils and their work.

The National Executive, in association with Diocesan Councils, should have power to suspend a Parish Council that fails in its duty. Such a parish would thereby be cut off from financial and other benefits until another Council was elected. This would be a never failing remedy against stagnation or abuse.

Various other types of useful and appropriate work, which Parish Councils could suitably undertake, will suggest themselves.

Vocationally organised Bodies and other forms of national endeavour, such as the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, Cultural Bodies, Labour Organisations and Agricultural Associations might be federated to the National Executive of Parish Councils, in somewhat the same way that Associate Guilds are federated in Muintir na Tíre. Individuals in federated organisations will be already represented through Parish Guilds and this is the only representation they should get. Vocational and other organisations would be in a position to help and to advance practical views on particular matters, which as individuals they could never do. This work rather than that of representation should be their function in the system.

It must be implicitly established that the National Executive of Parish Councils, representing all the people, shall be the parent and Governing Body which will advise the National Government. In this way the National Executive of Parish Councils elected by parish units would represent all the people, without division, on the



one hand, while the National Government elected by adult suffrage would represent all the people, without division on the other. With the National Council responsible to the National Government this implies absolute constitutional unity which is exactly what we require to execute the gigantic national task with which we are confronted.

Organised independently, without State backing, in present circumstances, any such organisation as Parish Councils will be very slow to fructify. They will be too slow to cope with the national requirements of the immediate future. People want to see results quickly from voluntary organisations. If these are not forthcoming the general human tendency is to fall away. Unaided voluntary organisations cannot show results until they are developed, and the people will not organise because they see little or no immediate results. This is one of the many vicious circles which ensnare our efforts to-day. It will be extremely difficult for Parish Councils to get sufficient fruitful work, in peace time, to keep usefully occupied, unless they have the authority and the practical backing of the State. Any organisation which has not sufficient useful work will almost inevitably rust or fall to pieces. Witness many of the Parish Emergency Committees established during 1940-41, even though world war conditions prevailed.

Another difficulty which is almost certain to confront voluntarily organised Parish Councils while the Political Party System exists, is political jealousy or fear. When Parish Councils show signs of becoming strong and widespread, they will begin to clash with the direct interest of Political Parties. Their very success, in fact, would tend to undermine Political Clubs and Branches. In our circumstances, Political Parties and Parish Councils cannot possibly exist together successfully for any length of time.

All kinds of destructive criticism can be hurled at such a scheme. This is the easiest way for doing nothing, and many of our people have become experts at this kind of criticism. The arch-enemies of progress, Pessimism, Hesitancy and Despair, will whisper around that our



people would never rise to the practical application of such an idealistic scheme of government and parish organisation. They will remind us of all the organising attempts which have already failed. They will advise us to stay as we are, that the enemy we know is best. If they cannot find any plausible flaw in the scheme itself, they will say that it is too simple. The Ten Commandments are very simple ; the difficulty is that we must be prepared to make a sincere attempt to observe, not seven, or nine but all of them. Without comparison, the difficulty in this scheme is, that to succeed we must make a sincere attempt to carry out all its major requirements. This is the kernel of our whole problem, and the way it is answered spells ruin or success for the Irish nation. If we can organise the country to fight the battles of war, surely we can organise it to fight the battles of peace. "What men have done, men may do". What men have not done men may also do with sincerity, perseverance and moral courage.

The questions which Irish men and women, who believe in our country's future, must ask themselves, are :—Is this plan of government, and all the rest, sound and practical in itself ? If it is carried out as one whole, based on Christian Social Teaching, will it succeed ? Can we do what others have done, if our people be good and helpful, and prepared to work with normal efficiency for the common good ? Can the required organisation be carried out, if the best young men and women in the country unite whole-heartedly to achieve it ?

Instead of assuming that a National Government and Parish Councils will fail in their work, and in their responsibilities, and that the latter will squander the monies entrusted to them, we might question ourselves as to whether it will be wise and prudent to pursue a failing programme to the bitter end ? If we can answer those questions favourably, we should in God's name, go ahead. Stereotyped central administration, informed by alien conceptions, has been operating for the past twenty years. The results are not flattering. Must we always continue to follow precedents, to imitate, and to avoid taking any kind of national or local risk ? Or shall we strike out



on an original path and place our trust in the people? If we do this, the people will not fail us. In such a system, worked sincerely, in conjunction with all the other phases of National Recovery, the people will quickly develop a truly national co-operative spirit of work for the common cause. The steadying and uplifting effects of local responsibility would very soon become evident, and would develop character and capacity in a way that has never before been tried or experienced in this country.

If we are at all worthy of the sacrifices which have been made for us, even in our own day, we can make this simple but all-embracing Plan a thoroughly sound and practical instrument for National Recovery. This can be done in every essential respect if confusing details, evil prophecy and side-issues are excluded. This Plan can be made to bring peace and prosperous harmony to a nation that has not in modern times been in a position to achieve practical national unity. Through it we can show to the world that true democracy based on Christian Social Teaching can succeed, as it has not succeeded heretofore, in a world torn and misled as never before, by false and vicious teaching.

### CHAPTER III

#### National Education and National Action

True spiritual and secular education, practically combined, constitutes the Christian foundation of all human progress. The national educational system of a country shapes and directs the entire outlook and future of the individual, as well as that of the nation. It is of supreme importance, therefore, that our educational system should be suitable and practical in every respect, spiritual, national, cultural and material. Our educational system must also play a great part in the restoration of the national language.



In view of these facts education is a vital factor in a National Recovery Plan.

After the establishment of our own Government, the National Executive decided to re-organise our Educational System as a fundamental step towards re-establishing our own civilisation.

The chief difference between the policy under the British Government and that under our own is that in the latter the Irish language and literature get prior place, and that Irish history, and a general Irish bias in education, are embodied in the Educational System. Otherwise there is little fundamental difference between our Educational System now and that which was in vogue thirty years ago.

The so-called National System of secular education was instituted in 1832. Its object was to give a plain, practical, general education to the masses of the children of town and country. The "National" System had another object in Ireland, namely, to kill nationality, our language and our native culture. The first aim was educationally sound, the system was not intended to impart elaborate education in any direction, but merely to equip ordinary young people to carry out their commitments to better effect in the plain and ordinary walks of life.

In the earlier period of Primary Education many teachers imparted general education far beyond the Primary Programme. In those days Secondary Schools were not so plentiful, nor so extensively patronised. There were no scholarships to Secondary Schools; and children who sought more advanced education remained at the primary school until they were sixteen and even eighteen years of age. None of these conditions obtains now.

The object of Primary Secular Education should be to teach all children, but particularly those who may not be aiming at Higher Education, to think, to reason, to see and to do for themselves. Unfortunately this fundamental educational objective has been to a great extent lost sight of, and consequently Secondary and Primary Education have, in the Primary System, become seriously confused. Judging by programmes and examinations, there does



not appear to be any clear, practical conception, of what Primary Education should embrace. The original basic aim—to impart plain, practical education to plain practical people—has been overlooked, and so the Primary Programme has been made too narrow, too abstract, overcrowded and far too difficult for the primary purpose it should normally serve. This is one of the chief reasons why our present Primary System is not proving an educational success.

The mixing of Secondary Education with real Primary Education in our schools has also militated very seriously against our efforts to recover the national language. The language recovery effort is being blamed for unsatisfactory results, which are really due to educational defects, and to methods which are seriously at fault.

The Primary Programme should be of prime or basic importance in our Educational System as a whole. Secondary Education should be based on, and should arise in close co-ordination from, the Primary System, but the latter should rigidly adhere to its original purpose.

Ireland is, by force of circumstances, mainly agricultural, and most people hope that it may always remain a strongly rural nation. Our Primary School Programme should, therefore, be drafted to meet the primary requirements of a rural community. Since the Primary System deals with children during the infant and early formative years, it should not be, educationally speaking, too ambitious. A considerable amount of latitude—even though it be controlled latitude—should be extended to teachers in different local circumstances, and regional education or special bias for particular areas should be encouraged. If the Primary Programme is rigid and overloaded, demanding full or more than reasonable attention from the average teacher, there can be little time devoted to those personal undefined touches, which local circumstances demand, and which the good teacher wishes to inculcate. Another important consideration is, that for a large proportion of country children and a good many others, Primary Education constitutes, in present circumstances, practically all the general education they will ever receive. In addition



to these educational considerations, we are attempting in Ireland to revive a language which in most parts of the country had ceased to be spoken. The System, therefore, should be plain and practical, and as far as it goes, it should be complete. Because of our special circumstances, great sympathy and understanding should be extended to parents, pupils and teachers alike.

The Programme operating at present (1942) fails substantially to fulfil any one of these important requirements. It does not cater for the rural population; it is heavy and extensive; it gives very little latitude—in practice at least—to the individual teacher; it attempts far more in some directions than the average child up to fourteen years of age can assimilate, or than will be required by the classes of children which Primary Education is expected mainly to serve. In other practical directions it fails to go far enough. In fact the present Programme, as well as including a considerable amount of material which should be actually found in the Secondary System, is too difficult and not well balanced. Arising from these causes, the enthusiasm and good-will of the teachers—particularly in the language revival—have been greatly undermined.

The primary teachers of the country are practically unanimous in their opinion that the present Primary Programme is neither suitable nor satisfactory.

The obligatory subjects in this programme are:—Irish, English, Mathematics, History, Geography, Music, Needlework (girls) and Religious Instruction. In addition to these obligatory subjects, Drawing, Rural or Natural Science, Physical Training, Domestic Science and Manual Instruction are optional. The very fact that a subject is optional implies that it is not regarded as being of major importance in the educational system. It is not, however, the number of obligatory subjects that is disturbing, but rather the extent, complexity and unsuitability of detail under each.

All the subjects on the Programme, with the exception of Needlework for girls, are abstract. Except to manipulate a pen or pencil, the child's hands are not developed, and his power of observation, originality and reasoning are



almost untouched. There is hardly any attempt made in the Programme to develop character, civic outlook or national spirit.

If the present programme is unsuitable, as any practical Educationist will admit and as results have proved; and if none of the present obligatory subjects can be omitted which is generally agreed; and if, at the same time, the obligatory Programme must be recast and other practical subjects added, this can only be done by lessening considerably the requirements in the present subjects. It may be stated without qualification, that this can and should be done. The time, or number of school hours, could be extended, but this is neither necessary nor desirable.

The framing of a Primary School Programme is of great national importance in a National Recovery Plan, but there is little use in criticising existing Programmes unless we are able to suggest something better and more practical to replace them.

#### IRISH AND ENGLISH

In approaching this very difficult problem of the two languages, the application of sincerity, practical experience and common sense is all important. Persons charged with the responsibility of building a Programme must know from practical experience what their aims are, and the practical circumstances surrounding them. Neither political experience, Civil Service skill, nor outstanding academic attainments, alone, will guarantee the possession of any of these vital requirements.

One of the great defects in the present Programme is that the literary and mathematical requirements are altogether excessive. This point is important, because it is mainly by rectifying this weakness that the Programme as a whole can be efficiently balanced. For example, in both the Irish and English Syllabuses, Formal Grammar and Analysis, Paraphrasing, memorising and recitation of difficult Poetic Pieces, are beyond the Primary School requirements; while Written Composition should be



confined to the higher standards. At present Drawing, Manual Instruction, Natural Science, Domestic Science and Citizenship are all crushed out to make room for difficult abstract material which from any point of view should not be there. Children should learn a substantial number of rollicking and patriotic songs and ballads and their airs. Heavy poetry which the average child does not, and probably never will, understand should be excluded. Elementary Elocution or Speech-Training can be taught effectively through this simple medium.

Any experienced teacher, or other practical observer, will agree that children who do not go beyond the Primary School for their general education, forget Formal Grammar very quickly. Never, in any circumstances afterwards, do they utilise Parsing or Analysis to assist them in reading, writing or speaking. Ordinary writing and ordinary speech are acquired by practice and by the eye and the ear. All the practical grammar required can be taught largely in the process of reading, writing, speaking, and in the correction of local mistakes in construction and pronunciation, together with a few practical grammatical rules. Formal Grammar has always been automatically included in Primary Programmes, without question. Properly taught it helps the child to reason, but there are other subjects which will develop this faculty and at the same time teach the child to observe and to manipulate in such a manner as to be of practical service in later life.

For the academic study of either a dead or a spoken language Grammar is essential. For those who intend to pursue Philology, Literature, the Professions, or the Church, Grammar is also essential. But all this has got nothing to do with Primary Education. In dealing with this question we must exclude from our minds the present Secondary School requirements. These requirements have seriously unbalanced our outlook on the language recovery, and on what should constitute real Primary Education.

Material for a set of standard books, not too difficult and suitably graded, with a definite practical rural bias, in both Irish and English, should be prepared by the Department of Education, under the guidance and direction



of a National Educational Council. The Department, rather than the Publishing Companies, should be responsible for the actual material for at least one set of primary school books. This material should correspond with the practical requirements of a Revised Programme. Informal grammar and conversation could be based largely on such standard books, as well as on the daily lives of the children.

There is not at all sufficient attention given to the preparation and grading of material for school readers. As a general rule the material is too difficult, not well selected, and is often merely a collection of ungraded articles and extracts from material which was written for adults. Such readers have no appeal for children. This applies to text books in Irish and in English. It must be borne constantly in mind that, if we are to recover oral Irish, the requirements in literary Irish and English must be suitably moderated.

The scope of the Geography and History courses should be considerably reduced. A moderate course in Geography and History of Ireland, and a very general survey of world Geography, on a Regional basis, is all that Primary School children require.

The Mathematical Courses are entirely too difficult. Abstract Arithmetic as well as formal Geometry and Algebra, are beyond the scope of real Primary Education, and should be excluded. The amount of formal Geometry, Algebra or Abstract Arithmetic which children of twelve to fourteen years can learn is not of much educational or practical value as compared with practical subjects. Formal Geometry, Algebra and Abstract Arithmetic are probably included in the Primary Programme, not for the purpose of completing Primary Education for the eighty to eighty-five per cent. of children who leave school at fourteen years, but for beginning Secondary Education for the others.

Mathematics in the Primary school should be confined to practical Arithmetic, practical Mensuration or measurements, Drawing, and the plain, practical application of ordinary geometric figures. A combination of these should constitute one composite subject.



Competitions for various kinds of scholarships, certificates and minor positions from Primary Schools in this country have reached an extraordinary pitch along abstract lines. The amount of very specialised Secondary School Mathematics, Literature and other abstract material which children have to know for these examinations is appalling. And why? Because the Programmes for these competitions are too restricted, too specialised and too abstract. Examinations and examination papers have become largely dissociated from the actual facts of Irish life, and are entirely too difficult. In these and other cases, oral or personal interviews are not at all sufficiently utilised.

The result of all this is that Schools and Colleges can make no serious attempt to educate children. They are compelled rather to "cram" them with more or less useless, abstract knowledge for these tests. The abnormal little book-worm with no eye or thought for life around him, and with a fabulous memory, is catered for, and will score, where the slow, practical, constructive observer—the future builder and toiler—will be left by the wayside.

Examination tests should not include Secondary Mathematics and Literature for examinations from Primary Schools. If Programmes and examinations are so framed "good" schools will "push" children, and other schools must follow suit or fall out. This is what is happening now. The big schools get most of the scholarships, etc.—not that they have a monopoly of the best children, but because they are in a position to "push" a chosen team to a specialised, unnatural and health-wrecking degree. Programmes and examinations cater for, and require this, and the only way to correct it is through a broad Primary Programme, setting out primary school requirements and nothing more.

Children in Primary Schools should receive a thoroughly practical training in Christian Doctrine. The best way to do this is to make the course, as far as is practicable, suitable to children of that age. It would be desirable also to have uniform courses in Religious Instruction for the whole country.



Our outlook on Primary Education must be revolutionised so as to bring this vital factor into practical harmony with the other features of national recovery. National Teachers must be facilitated in doing the work for which they were trained. This can be done, and the enthusiasm of Teachers can be revived and maintained if we have the sincerity, thoroughness and common sense that this work demands.

The present methods of selecting and training teachers—both Primary and Secondary—are very faulty and out-of-date. These methods must be radically overhauled as part of any educational re-organisation. The study of Leadership, Language, Organisation, Folklore, Local History, Drama, and other important features of real National Education, must be inculcated in our training systems.

#### SECONDARY EDUCATION AS A FACTOR OF NATIONAL RECOVERY.

Secondary Education is of even greater importance than Primary Education in the National Plan. It is amongst those who pass through Secondary Schools that leaders of thought and action should mainly be found. The directive influence of Secondary Education should be such as to mould young people to a very great degree for their future tasks.

The old Intermediate System of Secondary Education was criticized under three main heads, namely, that it was a "cram", depending mainly on memory, that it was too theoretical; and that it was un-Irish. The present Programme is still a "cram", depending mainly on memory; it is too abstract, and it does not appear to be producing any outstandingly practical pro-Irish results.

According to the 1942-43 Programme, the curriculum of a Secondary School must include instruction in five subjects for the Intermediate, and five subjects for the Leaving Certificate Examinations. These may not include any practical subject. In fact the standard required in the obligatory subjects is so high, and the scales of marks



are so arranged, that practical subjects are in practice almost debarred.

In addition to the obligatory subjects there are long lists of optional ones.

A usual Leaving Certificate course for boys, and even for girls, is:—Written or Literary Irish, English, and another language, Geography and History, and Mathematics. A pass, with or without Honours, in the Intermediate or Leaving Certificate courses is ordinarily obtained by a supreme mental and physical effort, on the part of both teacher and student, to fix in the memory, for a space of a few days at least, a great mass of specialised, stereotyped, abstract knowledge.

In our Primary Schools, Primary and Secondary Education are tragically mixed. In the Secondary Schools, Secondary and University Education are, if anything, more tragically mixed.

The function of Secondary Schools is to give Secondary or General Education. They should not be professional, and they should not specialise unduly in any particular subject. Secondary Schools in Ireland should also cater in a special, practical and sympathetic manner for a national outlook, and for the national language.

The defining of what should constitute a broad general Secondary Education, in our circumstances, appears to be wrapped in considerable uncertainty and confusion, judging by the many changes that occur in Programmes and courses, and the long lists of optional subjects that are provided.

In this country persons who have specialised and distinguished themselves in Languages, Literature or Mathematics, are thereby assumed to be authorities on Education. They may, or they may not, be authorities on any branch, particularly on what should constitute General Education in a country that is mainly rural. Yet, I believe, it is correct to say that it is persons of this type who are usually assigned the vitally important national duty of drafting Secondary and Matriculation Programmes, and most examination tests. Such persons will naturally tend to stress the subjects in which they have specialised,



particularly if they are not well acquainted with the practical ones. This, I advance, is what is happening, and which is at the root of many of our educational weaknesses. Like tends to produce like, and so the circle widens. It is of very little use being learned in the specialised or abstract sense, or able to quote things that are done or not done elsewhere under entirely different circumstances, if we are not also able to appreciate and cater for the particular circumstances and requirements of our own country.

The tendency in the drafting of Mathematical and Literary Courses, for both Matriculation and Leaving Certificate Programmes, has been extremely abstract. The general outlook towards Mathematical and Literary teaching is still theoretical. It appears to be based on the assumption that the solving of complex, abstract problems in these subjects is necessary for the quickening and development of the mind. There is no proof that this is so. Experience and results would pointedly indicate that the practical value of complex Mathematics and Abstract Literature for this purpose is entirely over-rated. These subjects should constitute a means to an end; instead of this they have become an end in themselves.

The Programmes for the Leaving Certificate of Secondary Schools, and for Matriculation, are undoubtedly specialised in Literature and Mathematics far beyond the ordinary requirements of what should constitute a General Education. The enormous quantity of Literary Irish, English and other languages required for these examinations is amazing. Then, several of the Mathematical Features really belong to the University. For Matriculation even girls must cover an extensive Literary Course in, say, three languages and take five or six different sections of Mathematics, including Logarithms and Trigonometry. But they are not required to know anything about Drawing, Domestic or Natural Science, or Oral Irish, while Address, Articulation, Delivery, Deportment and general suitability for University training are mere side-issues.



In the stress and straih of this educational jungle it is marks that count. These marks are so awarded that the Literary and Mathematical Subjects dominate, therefore, these subjects must be taken by the "good" student who wants to score.

It can hardly be claimed that courses of this kind constitute what any sensible person could describe as a broad General Secondary Education. Parents, as a rule, do not presume to criticise Educational Courses, but they can easily judge the consequences in their children, who in attempting to store up great quantities of abstract, unpractical knowledge become harassed and worried, and perhaps broken in health. At the same time their preparation for facing any of the ordinary activities of life, and even its temptations and trials, is deplorably poor.

After twenty years of our own Government, a young man or woman can pass with highest Honours the Leaving Certificate, which is regarded as the hallmark of General Education, or secure Matriculation and pass into any University in Ireland, without being able to speak the language of the country. To a sensible person this is almost incredible, after the gigantic efforts which have been made, and the lavish sums which have been expended, particularly in the Primary System, to restore Irish, not as a dead or written tongue, or for the purposes of literary or grammatical gymnastics, but as the living, spoken, national language of the people.

The absurdity, and the tragedy, of such educational orientation, in a country in our circumstances, must be apparent to any common sense person. There is no obligatory test pertaining to life around us, no provision for character development, or for any other branch of General Education, which the enthusiastic teacher might wish to include; not to speak of the inculcation of a vital, vivifying, Christian, National Spirit which will constitute the urge and driving force to do great things in after-life for love of God and Country.

Catholics comprise about ninety-three per cent. of the people of that portion of Ireland controlled by the Irish Government; Catholics also comprise about three-quarters



of the population of the entire country. Secondary Education for Catholics in Ireland is given almost entirely at Diocesan Colleges and at Convents and Colleges controlled by the various Religious Orders. A primary object of all such Colleges is to cater for the practical requirements of the Church. In this way, in Secondary Colleges, for boys particularly, Classical Education usually predominates. While intensive classical and mathematical Secondary Education may, in some respects, suit those students who intend to study for the Church, and for certain professional, literary or 'classical pursuits, it is decidedly unsuitable for those who intend to pursue Agriculture, or any other practical calling. At present students have little or no alternative in the matter. To this might be attributed, in a great measure, the fact that farmers' children who follow the present Secondary Programmes usually have very little inclination to return to the land. They prefer to enter Professions, already glutted beyond all hope of demand in this country, and prepare thereby for emigration. They leave the land when they are twelve to fourteen years. When they finish their Secondary Education they usually know much less about the country and rural life than when they first left home.

From the practical point of view Natural or Rural Science constitutes the foundation of Agricultural Science and should be compulsory in Primary and Secondary Schools. Specialisation in particular branches of Science such as Chemistry, Botany or Physics, in Secondary Schools, is not educationally sound, nor in accordance with the requirements of General Education. The University, or such Institution, is the place for specialisation. In all schools—Primary, Secondary and Vocational—educational visits to local places of Economic, Cultural or Historic interest, should be normally carried out.

It might be urged, with considerable reason and, I suggest, with a great amount of common sense, that for any student, a broad general Secondary Education on these lines, rather than a purely literary and mathematical one, would be more suitable as a preliminary preparation for the Church, or for a Professional or any other pursuit.



The present System of Secondary Education is not catering for the practical secular requirements of this country, for which the vast majority of students are, and should be, preparing.

For the requirements of the Church, it should be possible, without any serious difficulty, for Church and State to collaborate on this important question, that is, in securing, by segregation or otherwise, that suitable General Secondary Education may be given to those students who do not desire a predominantly Classical Course of Studies.

Abstract Classics, Literature and Mathematics have had their innings. They have formed the body and substance of Secondary Education in the past twenty years in Programmes of our own making. Either educationally, or as a factor of National Recovery, the results have not been satisfactory.

It must not be assumed from these recommendations that the cultural appreciation of Modern Languages, Literature and the Classics is under-estimated. It is rather an assertion that, in our circumstances, they are over, and theoretically rated to an unbalanced degree, while their abstraction from nature—their practical context—is culturally unsound. In the neglect of practice and the niceties of common life in our Educational System we are merely building on sand.

A survey of the Classics shows that rural imagery is constantly woven into the most perfect patterns. Some of the finest passages in Classical Literature are redolent of rural life, while practically all Biblical literature has a practical rural base. It is quite evident, from even a superficial examination of their works, that all the great Classical Writers were intensely familiar with natural life around them. Greek and Roman scholars wrote tracts on Rural Subjects which would generally apply to-day.

In contradiction to all this we, who rate the study of classical literature highly, divorce, almost completely, in our Educational System, the study of Modern and Classical Literature from their practical foundation. How can students be expected to appreciate such study, in the truer sense, when they know nothing of Nature, on which



Classical Literature is mainly built, and when Aesthetic Drawing and other practical forms of cultural appreciation are almost dogmatically excluded ?

Apart from the economic necessity for a rural bias in our Educational System, therefore, cultural pursuits demand it with equal insistence. When a poet or an author wants an inspiration he does not usually seek it among the chimneys of the town, but rather on the plain or the mountain, the river or the bog ; or beside the turf fires of country men and women, untarnished by that insatiable destroyer of nature and country life—so-called General Education.

#### THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE AS A FACTOR OF NATIONAL RECOVERY

For about thirty years before the establishment of the Irish Government the Gaelic League and other public and private forces, realising the national significance of the language, did great work for its restoration, and also for general national recovery. The people who did this were in a small minority ; they were opposed as vigorously by some of our own people as by the English, and they got very little financial aid from Irish sources. Yet they persisted, and succeeded as far as it was possible to do so in the circumstances, not because they were powerful, rich, or numerous, but for the simple reason that as a body they were sincere. It is the simple but powerful force of this same sincerity, guided by common sense, together with the planning and the execution of a practical comprehensive scheme of revival, which alone will now save the language cause from ignominious defeat.

The recovery of the language has been intimately associated with Education during the past twenty years. In fact, in latter years the burthen of recovering oral Irish has been thrown largely on Primary Schools. This national question can, therefore, be appropriately discussed along with Primary and Secondary Education.

Generally speaking, only a very small minority of Irish people are positively opposed to the recovery of the



national language as a living tongue. The greater proportion of this class is opposed to the language and its revival mainly because of its national significance. They are, in fact, a remnant of those who believe that we should always remain politically and socially attached to England and to the English mode of life. Next to this comes a very substantial proportion, those who, mainly by educational default, are more or less indifferent. Again there are those who follow the path of least resistance and who do not bother to think very deeply on the question. These are prepared to fall in, without much personal opposition, with whichever side exercises the greatest will. Others still oppose the language because of the confused and semi-educated condition of their children, resulting from faulty methods and educational defects for which the language recovery is being wrongly blamed. Outside of these classes a strong majority definitely favour the recovery of the language and are prepared to make personal sacrifices, greater or less, towards that end. This is borne out by the fact that every Government we have had since 1918 has automatically included the language recovery as a part of its political programme. The Educational Policy towards the language has never been seriously attacked. The methods adopted have often been criticised, but this must not be confused with the primary issue itself.

People have from time to time asked for a plan to save the national language. No plan has been forthcoming, because there is no separate one to save the language, only the one great National Plan that will save all.

One organ of the human body cannot be cured while the other organs rot; neither can one vital factor of Irish nationhood be saved while others are allowed to decay.

We have now had about twenty years' experience of the plans and methods which were devised to save Irish, and it will be generally agreed that the language has not made the headway that it should. In fact, it would appear from general observation that the whole language recovery plan, under present circumstances, is in serious danger of collapse.



There is, of course, what one might term a great mass of Irish in this country, but outside restricted Gaelic circles, and particular environments, one seldom hears the language spoken.

The stigma of inferiority is again being associated with the language and all that it represents by the leaders of so-called fashion and of snobbish social standing. If this is allowed to continue—and undoubtedly it will continue while our present systems persist—it will kill the language and all its works with a deadly, cynical and contemptuous certainty. In fact if one is seeking an effective plan to kill the national language, as an oral tongue, one has only to continue on the road we are going.

Many people are losing heart because of all the things they have seen happening around them during the past twenty years. On the other hand there is no need to be pessimistic, because of this. The marvel would be if the position were otherwise, since our efforts have been so disconnected, and our plans so incomplete and so lacking in practical outlook. In view of all these circumstances there is every reason for optimism in the future. If the efforts which have been made have produced such good results, in many directions, what shall we not achieve from practical thoroughness, sincerity and common sense?

We must have hope and faith and will, but we must have vision, co-operation, perseverance and a practical plan as well. Many mistakes and omissions have been made in our attempted recovery of the language. If some of these are recited, haphazardly, it is not for the purpose of going back, but rather that by rectifying them, and similar ones, we may go forward. Neither is it an attempt to give a plan to save the language; that plan is embodied in the entire scheme of National Action. Bearing this in mind, here are a few points which will indicate the many things which require to be done, when the ways and means are available:—

1. Economic stagnation in the Gaeltacht and elsewhere is one of the greatest enemies the language has. Economic prosperity, proportionately balanced



- with national cultural prosperity, will be its greatest aid.
2. The Primary Programme, and our entire educational system, as indicated elsewhere, must be radically revised.
  3. Learning a second language is memory training in itself, other memory training should therefore, for the time being at least, be omitted. The present programmes are memory-ridden.
  4. All examinations and interviews must include a genuine test in oral Irish. Very substantial credit must be given for oral Irish. Oral tests in Irish have, in some instances, as for public appointments and examinations, become merely a farce; in other cases they have been discontinued altogether.
  5. The Leaving Certificate of the Primary School, the Intermediate and Leaving Certificates of the Secondary School and the Matriculation Certificate, should only be given to genuine Irish speakers, and steps should be taken by the State to ensure that this policy is given practical recognition in industrial and other appointments.
  6. The practical slogan, "Speak Irish, whether good or indifferent," has been entirely outweighed in many instances by excessive requirements in the niceties of grammar. Unless children in the Galltacht can speak Irish, whether good or bad, as fluently as they speak English, they will tend to use English. Children who speak Irish more fluently than English will speak Irish amongst themselves. This latter condition should, therefore, be our positive aim.
  7. The entire examination system tends to spread and encourage the teaching of "book" Irish, while the real vital language issue, in this generation, the spoken word, has been pushed into secondary place.
  8. Teachers have done herculean work for the language revival. In the early years they were, as a body, earnest and enthusiastic. Many of them threw



their whole life energy into the work, but no serious effort was made to retain this goodwill. It must not again be assumed that teachers alone, or the Educational system alone, no matter how good, can save the language.

9. Teachers were discouraged by the fact that no serious attempt was made to organise the speaking of Irish after school. In most areas, consequently, the teacher's earlier efforts were substantially in vain.
10. All Departments of State should be equally energetic, sincere and whole-hearted, in playing their part in the language revival. Irish is dying outside the school and college doors. In State Departments it is dying inside.
11. One of the first and most serious mistakes made regarding the language, twenty years ago, was the placing of persons in "key" positions who were opposed to, or apathetic towards, Irish. This was a fatal mistake, and no care appears to have been exercised in the matter ever since.
12. Many individuals have not a flair for language learning, particularly after the mind has become more or less matured; unfortunately this fact was not sympathetically appreciated. Mothers of young children, and comparatively elderly men and women, were in many instances harshly treated, and pursued in various ways. All this damaged the language movement and tended to alienate teachers and others as a body.
13. There is a great lack of practical co-ordination between the Primary, Secondary and other schools regarding Irish. The policy of the all-Irish Primary and Secondary Schools should be vigorously and sincerely pursued. These schools promised great things until weak and faltering policy and systems maimed them.
14. There is no reason why the revival of the language, sensibly and sincerely planned, should interfere



- with general educational efficiency, or with economic or any other form of progress.
15. The whole question of teaching through Irish should be investigated in the light of the past twenty years' experience.
  16. Teachers were not given sufficient latitude or encouragement locally to exercise outstanding ability, enthusiasm and energy in the revival of oral Irish. The "acid test" should be that pupils on leaving the Primary School should be genuine Irish speakers, able to read plain Irish well and with a spirit of appreciation. We must have compulsion, much more virile and extended than the compulsion we have had. It is not compulsion that has marred our efforts up to now, but the lopsided and boggling manner in which compulsion has been enforced.
  17. Local circumstances were not sufficiently weighed and catered for.
  18. The sympathy and help of parents generally, throughout the country, were never sought for or enlisted. A well thought out practical plan to win and encourage parents to the side of the teachers in this work must be put into effect. This should be complementary to the teacher's efforts.
  19. The Gaelic League should be rejuvenated all over the country, in association with Parish Councils, to co-operate in carrying out various phases of the language revival.
  20. Business houses throughout the country should be expected to see that a certain reasonable and growing proportion of their staff are Irish speakers.
  21. Teachers, and public officials generally, were not asked or encouraged to bring up their children Irish speakers. The bad example given by many such persons, in urging and even forcing Irish on other people, while they brought up their own children English-speaking, and in an English-speaking atmosphere, tended to spread cynicism, hollowness and disbelief. It would be infinitely more



practical, and nationally beneficial, to expect teachers and officials who were parents to bring up their children Irish-speaking, than to expect them at or beyond middle life to learn Irish themselves.

22. Children of foreigners have been educationally catered for, but parents who brought up their children native Irish speakers in the home *outside* the Gaeltacht got no encouragement; in fact they and their children have been systematically penalised. Those children were expected in examinations to have very good literary English, while they got no examination credit for having very good oral Irish. They were also debarred from privileges extended to Gaeltacht children. The whole treatment of such parents and their children has been a flagrant violation of the policy and ideals they were asked to forward and believe when the national revival of the language began. Most parents soon realised that they were far ahead of what officialdom would stand for. They had to consider, in the light of actualities, their children's economic future. Many such parents sent their children to schools and colleges where they would get literary Irish and plenty of English; examination requirements demanded this, and nothing more.
23. No practical steps have been taken to inculcate into our Educational System a spirit of national reason and belief in the national language. Very few young people to-day appear at all to appreciate the national significance of the language. Without this spirit and appreciation our efforts will be futile.
24. Respect for the National Flag should be inculcated in every school and college in the country without exception.
25. Politics and political strivings have played havoc with the language drive during the past twenty years. Party politics divided the Gaelic-minded



- people into three or four opposing political camps. At the same time the active and passive opposition became strong and consolidated. The removal of this incidental cause of disunity of effort would be the greatest aid to the language, as well as to national recovery, that could possibly be conferred.
26. One of the most outstanding weaknesses of the Party Political System of Government during the past twenty years has been the almost complete absence of national propaganda and language organisation.

In no country are these agencies more urgently needed to counteract the almost overwhelming forces of national destruction that assail us. Apart from internal attack there is that terrifying and never ending deluge pouring down on this country from the English-speaking world, in the form of literature, cinema products, radio, fashion, example, commercial influences and personal contact. We have now reached the critical stage, when we must either surrender completely to these forces or defend ourselves successfully against them. This defence must be different from any we have tried before—it must be part of the National Plan.

There are a great many other practical defects, weaknesses, omissions and inconsistencies in the educational, psychological and other aspects of the language revival scheme, and there are innumerable other aids, great and small, which can be invoked. Examples of these are:—The Press, Place-names, Prizes, Parish Histories, Cinemas, Radio, Printing, Publishing, Feisheanna, Fainne, Organisation of Irish-speaking Youth, Scientific Study and application of language-teaching methods, Training of Irish-speaking nurses and domestic servants, and a great many others.

Those who were indifferent, hostile or apathetic, saw years ago that we were not genuinely in earnest or, if we were in earnest, that we did not possess the thoroughness and organising ability to put our desires into practical effect.



A National Government must show by example and action that it is sincere. It must let the country see that its national policy, for national language domination, definitely established, will be carried through with justice, determination and common sense, brooking neither opposition, slander nor default.

#### SUGGESTED PROGRAMMES

Bearing in mind what has been said about Primary and Secondary Education, and the language recovery, the Primary School Programme which might replace the present one would be: *Boys*—Irish, English, Arithmetic, including Practical Measurements and Drawing, Geography and History, Music, Physical Training, Manual Instruction, Elementary Natural Science and Religious Instruction. *Girls*—These subjects, excepting Manual Instruction, with Domestic Science and Needlework in addition.

Manual Instruction might be gradually introduced into the more suitable schools at first. The courses in Arithmetic and Physical Training for girls should be lighter than those for boys. National spirit, deportment, diction, character training and vocal expression should get definite attention in all schools. Systems or features of practical education which have proved successful in other countries should be investigated.

A Primary Programme on these lines can be drafted by a few competent persons—a Programme which will fulfil all the requirements of Primary Education. Carried out in the spirit indicated, such a Programme will meet with the whole-hearted approval and co-operation of teachers, parents and pupils—tremendous and necessary goodwill advantages which the present Programme lacks.

To replace the present Secondary School Programme, the following subjects are recommended as a basis for a general course of Secondary Education which would arise, in close co-ordination, from the Primary system: Irish, oral and written; English, Latin or Greek, Mathematics including Drawing; Geography and History; Natural



Science ; Music and Singing ; Manual Instruction (boys) ; Christian National Civics and Character Training ; Domestic Science (girls) ; Physical Training, including National games ; Religious Instruction. These are the obligatory subjects which might be covered during the four years' preparation for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate Examinations. If desired some of the subjects might be confined to the Intermediate Period. There would also be a short list of approved optional subjects.

The Secondary Schools of the country might ultimately be divided into five groups or classes, which would give a bias, without specialisation, in the final years of Secondary Education, respectively towards Agriculture, Economics, Classics, Technology and Domestic Science.

Oral Irish must be made compulsory in the Secondary system, as well as in the Primary, and it must carry a substantial proportion of marks, or examination credit, and be a failing subject in all examinations. In fact an oral test covering general knowledge, address and diction, should constitute an essential part of the Leaving Certificate test in both systems. The chief reason why an oral test has not been included heretofore is the difficulty of examining large numbers of students individually. This reason should never have been allowed to stand in the way. It made thereby a mockery of the whole language recovery ideal. The system which has been practised successfully in professional examinations for teachers in training, for some years past, should be suitable for Secondary school tests. By this system, marks are assessed by the teachers of the subject, and about ten per cent. of the students are subsequently examined by Inspectors. This or some other practical system of assessment can easily be devised to overcome the present ridiculous situation in which Oral Irish for examination credit is completely ignored.

Every girl who passes through a Secondary school, should cover a comprehensive course in practical Domestic Science and other practical subjects, and every boy should do a practical course in Manual Training, Natural Science, Drawing and Music. Like Oral Irish



and other important subjects, these courses should carry substantial examination credit.

As in the case of the Primary programme, the only practical way in which this change can be carried out is by lessening considerably the abstract requirements in Literature, Mathematics, History and world Geography. As in the Primary Programme, this can and should be done.

### VOCATIONAL AND POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The Vocational Education System gives practical, post-primary education of what might be termed a semi-trade or semi-professional nature. This system is not yet sufficiently developed. It is difficult to get the rural, and perhaps to a lesser extent the urban, community to appreciate this type of education, except those branches of it which lead directly to some form of paid occupation. In this connection some system of compulsory attendance must be established, at least for those of a certain age who are not otherwise engaged. If compulsion is not enforced the national value of vocational education, and the splendid vocational schools erected in recent years all over the country, will be seriously impaired.

There is a great temptation, when the practical courses are not well supported voluntarily, to cater for Commercial aims, such as typewriting. These courses, for country children particularly, usually offer a very poor reward. For this reason such courses should be substantially out-ruled in rural areas, and definitely controlled even in towns. There are immense possibilities for rural training in vocational schools, in harmony and association with agricultural education and development.

For the vast majority of the children of the country—those who cannot pursue Secondary education—adequate State provision for post-primary education and organisation has not yet been made. The Department of Education has carried out some experimental work in this direction. This question must be vigorously and practically dealt with. The building and equipping of vocational schools



is only a preparation. The important point is to ensure that they will be adequately utilised.

Young people who leave the Primary school at fourteen years of age, and who are unemployed, should be expected to attend some school until they are, say, seventeen to eighteen years; suitable general education beyond the primary programme with a definite practical and regional basis being arranged. Young people who have left the Primary school and who are engaged at farming or other rural occupation should be expected to attend some school for a certain number of days or hours each year, say between November 1st and February 10th. During this period general education, suitable to their age and requirements, should be given until they are, say, seventeen to eighteen years. Alternative evening classes might be provided. There should be close co-operation and co-ordination between Primary Vocational and Agricultural education, particularly for the post-primary education of this large section of young people.

The post-primary organisation of youth is a vitally important aspect of national reconstruction. It is a big feature of national organisation in itself. In addition to a permanent system of national youth organisation, all children of post-primary age including students of Secondary Schools, who are not in definite occupation, should be brought together for at least a month during summer for practical training in citizenship, physical culture, and so on. They should be trained and directed for citizenship duties throughout the year. All this work must be organised on a national basis from the very foundation, in close co-operation with all other features of national recovery.

Practically all young people have a particular liking, "bent", vocation or calling in certain directions. If they are allowed and encouraged to develop such vocations, they will usually succeed in life. It is extremely wrong to compel a young person to pursue a life-profession to which he positively objects. From long experience and observation it would appear that most of the failures and mis-fits in life are due to non-appreciation by parents and others of vocational inclinations in early life. This is



a vital factor, whether looked at from an educational, economic, spiritual, national or any other aspect. Neither our educational nor any other system takes cognisance of this and consequently parents themselves in many instances do not appreciate its grave significance either. All children, during the Secondary, vocational, or other periods of education, should be helped, by advice and direction, to decide, for themselves and the country, their own life destiny.

### AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Agriculture as a subject should not be taught either in Primary or Secondary schools. It should be taught in Agricultural Colleges and Universities, and by the qualified staffs of the Department of Agriculture and kindred bodies. Neither Primary nor Secondary teachers are normally qualified to teach this subject. Agriculture, like Medicine, Law or Engineering, is a life study, and is purely vocational or economic. Primary school children, and even children of Secondary school age, are not concerned about practical economics. They are, however, passionately interested in the fundamental, practical facts of life around them, or in what constitutes Natural or Rural Science. The provisions made for Agricultural education are not at all adequate. In a reorganised economic and educational system, agricultural educational centres, as well as provision for itinerant instruction in agriculture and kindred subjects, must be greatly increased.

In Vocational, post-primary and other such courses in rural areas, the link between practical subjects like Rural Science, Manual work and Agriculture should be more closely knit. A great deal of time and vocational teaching is lost at Agricultural classes and other courses, because of lack of suitable educational preparation on the part of young men and women in rural areas for these courses. This can be easily counteracted by suitable orientation of curricula in the final years of Primary education and in the Secondary and Vocational systems.



## UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND NATIONAL ACTION

University education should cater primarily for the economic and cultural requirements of the country. Universities should avoid the training of excessive numbers in professions for which there is no adequate demand at home. In training excessive numbers of professionals we are merely imitating big empire countries, whose colonies absorb the surplus. In our case, apart from the great economic loss of training excessive numbers, we are also losing the professional and citizenship services of those who emigrate.

In a normal country the University is the cradle of national direction, spirit, thought and action. A National Government must see that this normal condition is established and maintained throughout our whole co-ordinated system of education, and that, as in other countries, in fullness and sincerity, Universities shall lead the way.

## CONCLUSION

We have built our educational system very substantially on memory, imitation and theory. The educational system of a resurgent nation must be based on the actual facts of its own life.

Several countries have deliberately separated religious from secular instruction in their educational system; others have suppressed religious teaching altogether. Some of these countries are slowly awakening to their mistake. All of them have already paid part of the penalty in moral depravity and national rot. Probably on account of our long national suppression, we are tremendously prone to imitate. This country is over 99 per cent. Christian, yet in Religious instruction, in our Educational System, we tend to imitate other countries. No provision is made in our Universities for giving a Christian tone and orientation to Education, while in our Secondary Programme official provision for Religious instruction is omitted. It is not a sufficient answer to say that Religious Bodies provide for this. In a Christian country Christian spirit, tone and direction should permeate the whole structure of its



Educational System and the whole life of its colleges and schools.

A National Board or Council of Education for the purpose of aim and co-ordination between the various branches should be established by a National Government. Persons entrusted with this vital task of establishing, directing and maintaining Educational Policy must have three essential qualifications : They must be Irish in outlook ; they must be practical ; they must be sincere. The central aim of such a Council must be to ensure that the Educational System, as a co-ordinated whole, will serve the country in the best and most practical way that Education can.

This essay on education and the language is not, of course, exhaustive. There are many other educational and language factors of great importance. It is merely an attempt to show the place and the importance of education in a National Reconstruction Plan. It will have served its purpose if the glaring defects which are cited, and the simple remedies which are suggested, will make us appreciate our position as a nation, and our duty to God, to ourselves and to the world.

## CHAPTER IV

### National Economy and National Action

Ireland is to-day, and always has been, mainly agricultural. The reason for this is not that the country is unsuitable for industrial development, but rather that our industries were deliberately suppressed during the last century. Otherwise this country would have developed a normal Agricultural-Industrial System, suitable to our own requirements, like that of any other small European nation.

In the past twenty years we have made great strides towards balancing our Economic System by the building



up of industries. These industries tend to centre in the towns and cities. This development may be advisable, to a certain extent, for the production of things in substantial demand ; or for securing sea transport, specialised labour, or other advantages. Rural industries, however, suitable to particular environments should also be developed on a nation-wide scale, and particular attention should be given to the development of industries for which we have the raw material. Local small-scale rural industries, sensibly planned, would help considerably to build up and maintain a well-balanced rural population. The wholesale industrialisation of towns and cities, without the balanced organisation of Rural Economy, would tend to produce the contrary effect.

In the same way that all our national problems are parts of one great problem, different branches of economic effort are parts of our Economic System as a whole. Industrial development, Rural Economy and Finance, must all be considered together as essential parts of one section of National Life. Industry must be effectively controlled by Irish people. At present in industry Irish Nationals must hold at least fifty-one per cent. of national share capital ; this is easily overcome in a country situated as we are. Industry must conform to the requirements of a National Recovery Plan. It must be economic in itself and not prey on any other section of the community. The National Government, protecting the common good, must exercise a directive and restrictive control over all units of industrial life. "Free competition, though within certain limits right and productive of good results, cannot be the guiding principle of economic life". (Pius XI, Social Order.)

On the other hand, monopolisation under Protection must also be stringently controlled. The national value of any enterprise must not be measured by the amount of profit it makes. In fact, the accumulation of undue profits is irrefutable evidence that the industry places its own interests before those of the nation. The economy of a country is sound only to the extent to which the prosperity of the individual corresponds to the common good.



Ours is a Christian State, yet we have retained a great deal of the tradition, outlook and details of the Victorian dictum that "Business is supreme", and that the quoting of Christ's Law must not interfere with the quoting of prices. Even in England—where the evils of unrestricted Capitalism, so graphically portrayed by Dickens, flourished for two centuries—frantic efforts are being made to stem the havoc it has wrought.

A substantial number of people in this country have nett incomes out of all proportion to the economic standards which should prevail in a small community. From a social, Christian and economic point of view, this is wrong. Very big incomes are accompanied by very small ones; opulence and extravagance are associated with poverty and want, and the wanton discontent of the rich and the starving discontent of the poor are also in close association. This same cause has spread ruin and death all over the world, breeding war and Communism and the other paganisms which trouble humanity to-day. His Holiness Pope Pius XII in his Encyclical to America—True and False Prosperity, 1939—was referring to these conditions when he stated:—"God does not wish that some should have excessive wealth, while others are in such straits that they lack the necessities of life", and Pius XI was dealing with the same thing when he wrote:—"No system of property can meet with the Church's approval unless it secures such a distribution of ownership that the needs of all persons and classes are properly satisfied" (Social Order). How different is this from the Capitalistic idea that "Business is Business", need conform to no Christian Law, and may with impunity override the rights and even the very person of the individual? "To recognise a man's rights without enforcing his duties corrupts him; to enforce his duties without recognising his rights enslaves him" (Marshal Petain). Many Irish people cry loudly for their rights but cry just as loudly against their duties.

Previous to the first great world war, the Taxing System was utilised in England, and in this country through England, mainly for the purpose of securing money for



Public Services. No serious effort was made in those days to regulate society by this means. Since then financial enactments, such as Super-tax, Excess Profits Tax, and the more recent deliberately heavy taxing of very big incomes, in England, have the definite two-fold object of, firstly, the collection of money for Public Services, as before, and secondly, the regulation of society, to a definite extent, by drastically curtailing excessive incomes. If this has been found expedient, in a great wealthy empire, under the stress of war, of how much greater necessity is it in a small country, nationally and economically unorganised, under the stress of a stagnant peace?

Farmers blame big salaries, given to officials and others, as the cause of their financial troubles. Big salaries are only a small part of the cause. Big incomes, however, are a serious burthen on Agriculture. It is from the rural section of the community, to a great extent, that incomes in the various other vocations in this country are primarily obtained.

Under the present system, individuals are allowed to enjoy whatever nett incomes they are able to secure, no matter how big, provided they pay the income tax assessed. A conservative maximum and a minimum standard of nett income should be aimed at. It should be the object of the State to bring every person, able and willing to work, within this compass. This is merely the practical application of a Christian Constitution in a practising Christian State.

Some years ago members of the Government set an example in reducing their own salaries. The project did not succeed and had to be substantially abandoned. The explanation of this is, that it was unfair to expect Ministers, with a great amount of public commitments, to receive incomes which were only a fraction of those enjoyed by business, professional and other persons, who had much fewer responsibilities, and with whom, in the ordinary affairs of life, Ministers had had to compete. In other words, while the original aim was sound in itself it could only be practicable if applied all round. If applied



universally, it would correct the chief abuses for which the Capitalistic System is commonly blamed.

It is not the total wealth of a country that is of major, social or economic importance, but the manner in which it is distributed and used. Ireland, for example, is intrinsically one of the richest small countries in the world, in soil, climate, water and other natural requirements; yet it has for generations been called poor by unthinking people and those who were interested in maintaining this fallacy. This condition was due to the unchristian distribution of wealth which State-protected Landlordism, anti-Irish vested interests, industrial suppression, unlimited profits and Unionist ascendancy, imposed on this country under alien government. It cannot be too clearly emphasised that the Capitalist system, rightly interpreted, is not in itself a bad system. It is in complete accordance with Christian Social Teaching, that is, the right and the desirability of possession of property and the ownership, and the sharing by individuals in the ownership, of industrial and other enterprises. Farmers, and even Labourers, who own property are Capitalists in the strict sense. It is the flagrant abuse of Capitalism, with all its pride and pomp and greed, that has made this term reprehensible in the eyes of many.

The taxing machine has not been utilised effectively in this country for this second purpose, namely, to help to prevent the abuse of Capitalism, and thereby help to maintain an equitable distribution of wealth, amongst all sections of the community. This does not imply that taxation must be increased, but rather that essential taxation should be equitably assessed and distributed. Towards this end, taxing can be used to regulate incomes and standards of living within definite bounds. It must help to regulate our national economy as a whole, as well as providing money for the financing of the State.

The excessive taxing of industries, or potential industries, merely to facilitate easy tax gathering, is wrong. Tobacco leaf, in this country, is an example of this. The tobacco plant grows wild in Wexford, and our soil and climate suit it admirably. It could be made a very valu-



able small farm industry because its growth entails careful hand labour. Its development has been greatly restricted up to the present, because imported tobacco leaf is an easy source of six or seven million pounds revenue annually. Some kinds of light tobacco may not succeed here ; there is, however, no question but that the great bulk of our heavier tobacco requirements could be grown successfully at home.

The immediate result of the effective use of the Taxing Machine, together with other agencies of National Recovery, would be that people could discharge their commitments on more moderately-scaled incomes. Usury, exploitation, or profiteering—all closely related—have been repeatedly condemned by the Church. Any form of national organisation, to succeed, must overcome these evils. In one form or another, they now permeate everywhere, and are practised, to a greater or lesser extent, by most people who are in a position to do so. Individuals find that they require more and still more money to ward off the ever-growing train of exploiters who batten on them. All this unrestricted scrambling for money encourages greed, selfishness and extravagance.

One of the tenets of Communistic teaching is the levelling down and the levelling up of incomes. When this purely Christian principle is introduced, interested persons will cry out that this is the thin end of the wedge of Communism. We must not allow ourselves to be stampeded in this way.

There is no necessity to turn to pagan socialism or any other barren remedy, to abolish these abuses and allow all sections of the community a fair share of the country's goods. We have the remedy if we have the will and the ability to utilise it. Papal Encyclicals show how these abuses can be effectively dealt with inside the bounds of Christian, Social Teaching. The machinery to do this is to be found in the Taxing System properly utilised, a State Controlled Credit and Monetary System, a very active Prices Commission and Parish Councils, all working together under a National Government and wholeheartedly backed by a truly Christian, co-operative national



spirit in the people. This can be done within the framework of an all-embracing National Recovery Plan, and in no other way.

The agricultural side of our Economic System has not advanced to any great extent in the past twenty years. We have yet no National Agricultural Policy worthy of the name. Under the British Government the development and proper national use of the land were controlled and limited by powerful financial and other interests. Except for the exigencies of the present war, this condition, in a very substantial measure, has been allowed to persist. This may be attributable, in some degree, to the fact that the economic orientation of this country has been mainly in the hands, politically, of persons of urban outlook. It is mainly due to the weaknesses which follow the Party Political System of Government and to the other unsound systems we retained.

That this economic system is nationally unsound would appear to be self-evident. The following facts go to prove this, if indeed any proof is needed:—

1. Our population is low, and is decreasing.
2. Even in normal times we have considerable emigration and a large proportion of unemployed.
3. The standard of living of a large section of the community is low and unstable.
4. We depend, in peace times, on outside sources for the main proportion of our bread supply.
5. We produce excessive quantities of live stock and their products, for which there is not a stable economic market, while we import agricultural, industrial and other labour-requiring products which we could produce at home.
6. A large percentage of our ten to twelve million acres of arable grass land has reverted to the appearance and economic condition of a prairie. Several million acres of the remainder are still unreclaimed.

It suited England's policy in years gone by to encourage grass and live stock in this country, while wheat, fuel, concentrated animal foods and manufactured



goods were imported in her ships from over seas. This policy resulted—as it was probably intended to result—in a reduced population. It was a nation-destroying policy; nevertheless we have continued, substantially, to practise it. It might be pointed out that, with all her Colonies and mercantile development, this policy was not practised by industrial Britain. At present she has sixteen million acres under cultivation. To have a like proportion of our total land tilled in the twenty-six counties of Rural Ireland we should cultivate over four and a half million acres. We have at present less than two and a half million acres tilled. Even in peace times Britain had relatively over twice the area under cultivation that we had. Moreover, while Britain imports large quantities of food, she exports goods, the manufacture of which provides great employment. We import wheat and animal foods, but we export, in the main, primary products also, which give proportionately very little employment.

This agricultural policy has been altered considerably, of course, here and there, but we have made no serious attempt to uproot it.

Many people in this country favour Free Trade. If we can buy wheat, sugar, animal foods, tobacco leaf, agricultural seeds, manufactured goods, power, fuel and other things from the outside world cheaper than we can produce them, or their substitutes, why produce them at home? This kind of reasoning has deceived numbers of people. According to this Free Trade theory we should produce here only those commodities whose prices can compete with world prices. Our people would then continue to emigrate in still greater number, to help to produce abroad other things we require, while aliens, with a more practical sense for realities, would continue to come in to take their place.

Of course, if the world were a Utopia, all human requirements would be produced where they could be produced best. There would then be a grand universal system of interchange of commodities. There is no evidence that this condition of perfection will be reached among the nations of the earth. The tendency is the other way;



even big empires now trade mainly within themselves. To suggest that we alone should practise Free Trade would be foolishness in the extreme.

The advocates of Free Trade are careful not to push their argument to its logical conclusion, or to cite the consequences of this system in Ireland, for the past 100 years. Without resorting to "sweated labour" there is scarcely anything we could produce that could nowadays compete favourably, in a world market, with "Big Business" and cheaply produced products from abroad. Race horses, racing dogs, cattle, sheep, pigs and potatoes, which admittedly cannot be produced better elsewhere, may be exceptions.

The family is not only the true Christian foundation of the nation, but it is also its true social, educational and economic foundation. If the economic conditions of the family of average circumstances, and particularly of the rural family, are unstable and unsound, then the entire economic system of the nation is bound to be in the same condition. Rural families, carrying on mixed farming, constitute the mainstay, or economic "back bone," of this country. If our National Economic System is sound, mixed tillage farming, reasonably well conducted, will succeed. If the cities and towns ceased to exist, Rural Ireland could live without them as it did for 1,000 years; but if Rural Ireland were destroyed, the cities and towns would quickly disappear.

No informed person will dispute the fact that mixed farming in this country, under average circumstances, is not a very profitable undertaking to the farmer and his family. He can produce good crops and other products, and secure them well, but he does not normally receive a fair or equitable return for his labour and expenditure. He is consequently inclined to allow his land, or a large proportion of it, to run to grass. He has no alternative when he finds that tillage farming fails to pay. He tills when tillage pays, and reverts to grass when the economic circumstances of tillage compel him.

It has been proved abundantly by actual experiments that uncared pasturage gives the least return of any crop,



both to the occupier and to the nation. But ordinary untended pasture requires the least outlay in management and labour, the least overhead expenditure, and also, in our climate, entails the least economic risks. It is, in fact, little if at all different from prairie farming on the American or Australian continents, where vast tracts of virgin land are available.

In all the provinces of Ireland thousands of acres of unkempt pasture and waste land meet the eye. Out of about eleven million acres of arable land only one and a half million acres were under cultivation in 1938. In the same year we imported about £6,500,000 worth of animal foods and close on £6,000,000 worth of wheat, mainly for human food, all of which, or their substitutes, could be grown at home.

Professor E. J. Sheehy, of University College, Dublin, one of the foremost authorities in Europe on animal nutrition, wrote in the *Muintir na Tíre Official Handbook*, 1941: "The possibility of our becoming self-sufficient in respect of food for man and stock is no longer a question. We must accomplish it or perish. Time and time again, it has been contended that Irish wheat is inferior, that barley is not a substitute for maize, and that in the absence of oil cake, cattle could not be fattened. Necessity has quickly exploded the fallacy of such contentions. Irish wheat makes bread equal to any. Irish barley is as good as imported maize for pigs, poultry and cattle feeding. Instead of imported oil cakes for cattle, we can have all we want and to spare of fresh succulent young grass, preserved as silage for winter feeding. In addition, beans can be grown to provide the proteins, the high content of which constitutes the merit of oil cakes. Beans make excellent feeding for pigs and poultry as well as for cattle, sheep and horses. Is it necessary to mention the potato . . . which can be grown and used to three times the extent it has been? Again, in oats we have a food which is excellent for both man and stock, and which can be grown with success in almost every townland in Ireland."

All kinds of scrappy remedies for farming conditions have been advanced, but no permanent all-embracing one.



Moreover, I am satisfied that there is no basic remedy for the present condition except within the scope of a comprehensive National Recovery Plan.

Attempts at organising farmers against the rest of the community, boycotting the towns, fighting Labour, striving for a non-political organisation inside a political system, or founding a Political Agricultural Party, will all be futile in the future, as they have been in the past. All such measures merely constitute class war under various disguises, making for further national disunity and, without any doubt, for ultimate defeat.

In practice what the farmer wants is a reasonable return for the output of his work. Give him this and all else will follow. It is not want of amusement, nor the glamour of the towns which induces people to leave the land. Country people can make their own amusements, in their own way, provided their industry pays. But if the present conditions, under which farming is carried on in this country, and the consequent flight from the land, are not permanently cured, the whole nation will collapse, because the brain and brawn of town and city are maintained and recruited from the land, and from nowhere else.

"It is a logical and understandable fact that once we could point to a prosperous Agriculture, down would go our unemployment figures, up would go the demand of the primary producer for manufactured articles and their increased output would in turn necessitate a greater demand for labour. This important repercussion with its beneficial results upon the health, stamina and birth rate of the people seems to have escaped attention altogether." This was written in 1939 by V. C. Vickers, a late Governor of the Bank of England. He was referring to Industrial England; but in Rural Ireland, where the truth of this statement is proportionately many times more applicable, it seems to have escaped attention also.

This problem of National Economy is not an easy one to solve, and that is probably the chief reason why we have shirked it up to this. But we must face and solve it now, or take the inevitable consequences of national defeat. The Social-Economic-Educational canker which



has been weakening and depopulating the country for a hundred years will not be easily uprooted. It will take the united will and effort of the nation, under capable guidance, and possessed of a practical Plan, to achieve our goal.

We have been attempting, up to this, to relieve farming conditions without interfering seriously with any other aspect of social or economic life. These attempts have failed and will always fail. It cannot be too often repeated that the whole Economic-Social System of the country is one problem. We must make every section of the community conform to the well-being of the whole. So long as other sections are allowed to prey, at will, on farming ; so long as they can gauge their prices and charges by the amount of money the farmer appears to have got, neither "Reliefs" nor Bounties will be of much avail. The farming problem can be solved, but to do this we must divide profit, share, and effort between the Agricultural, Labour, Industrial, Financial and other interests of the nation. We must be prepared to co-operate wholeheartedly, to make sacrifices, to put up with inconveniences without grumbling, to give up jobbery, self-seeking, destructive criticism and slander, to consider other people's positions as well as our own ; in other words, to be good and helpful citizens. Without this no government can succeed, no matter how good its plan may be ; with it any efficient government can. If some of us are not prepared to respond—to do our merest Christian and social duty, we must be compelled to do so, by a National Government, backed by a well organised system of statutory Parish Councils.

It would be premature, at this stage, to outline a Rural Economic Plan. There are literally hundreds of more or less important factors of National Rural Economy which might be mentioned. All of these would be sound and practical, if carried out as part of a comprehensive National Recovery Plan, but in no other way.

The following are examples ; they are merely recited haphazardly. Most persons who are familiar with the country know them already :—



Institute a great national system of arterial drainage and reclamation, to recover the hundreds of thousands of acres of potentially arable land all over the country, at present under marshes, water-logged valleys, bogs and out-away bogs.

There are in this country about four million acres of waste, barren and bog land, or, in other words, about a quarter of the total land area of the country. At least half of this area is capable of being reclaimed into first and second class arable land. This would provide space for, say, twenty thousand homesteads of 30 to 60 acres each, as well as providing additional arable land for many uneconomic holdings. A great proportion of the remaining non-arable land could be planted. That this potential land should be allowed to remain, in a small country, almost in its natural condition, without any serious effort of recovery, constitutes a veritable impeachment of those responsible to the nation.

Apart from war conditions, the bogs of Ireland should be utilised for fuel and power. The ground or space they occupy, and all other reclaimable land, should be recovered by a well-planned great national scheme of reclamation which could go hand-in-hand with turf cutting, arterial drainage and afforestation. The cutting away and removal of bog to the rock, clay, or sand, which is taking place in many parts, particularly in the West, should be prevented.

Institute a great system of National Afforestation, to rectify "The Rape of Ireland."

Wipe out that most demoralising and universally condemned scheme for public unemployment—"The Dole."

Institute a practical Credit System for farmers, in conjunction with Parish Councils. Utility loans should be interest free, or at least very cheaply granted.

Set up a Court or Council of independent persons, with very wide powers, to deal with exploitation of every kind, by traders, professionals, companies, financiers, or others. Exploitation, in every sphere of life, must be stopped by the development of a sincere spirit of Christian, national



co-operation backed, where required, by a strong and unflinching hand.

Protect the producer, and give a proper guaranteed price for Irish milling wheat, flax, feeding and malting barley, fruit, agricultural seeds, sugar beet, tobacco leaf, onions, fuel and other things which we import at present, but could produce at home. Even our present human and animal population could absorb the produce of at least an additional million acres of tillage, if imported foods, which we could produce at home, were shut out.

Organise the production of these products in proportionate quantities and in suitable areas.

Organise transport, including waterways, and the carrying, sale, and delivery of agricultural and other produce, such as milk, bread and meat, so as to reduce the cost of distribution.

Organise Agricultural and general Education.

Organise the distribution of Labour through Parish and other Councils.

Develop the making and use of ensilage, and the proper treatment of grass.

The use of our own and our potential products must be organised on a national scale, and our standard of living must be regulated and directed towards that end.

Commissions have enquired into a variety of problems during the past twenty years, and made lists of recommendations. Only an infinitesimal number of these recommendations has been carried out. The actual reason for this is that each Commission dealt only with a small section of this big, complex problem. Consequently, no matter how good its recommendations might have been in themselves, they were immediately confronted by other parts of the problem, which were not touched by the particular Commission's recommendations, and were overwhelmed by them. Recommendations had to fit into the existing scheme of things, or be shelved. A small, competent committee might now examine all those reports and recommendations, in connection with a new order, and correlate, with other factors, those of them that are worth consideration.



There is almost an unlimited supply of reproductive public work in nearly every quarter of the country. This work might be organised through various Councils, in association with Parish Councils.

All our Sea Industries, such as Fishing and Kelp, should be re-organised, and inland fishing developed.

The breaking up into economic holdings of grazing lands, and portions of excessively big holdings, should be speeded up. Ownership is a natural as well as a Christian right, but ownership must be kept within reasonable bounds. Ownership of all the means of production by the State is "manifestly against justice." (*Rerum Novarum*.) But such abuses as the acquiring and holding of excessive land, and its use against the common good, are, in a small country like ours, also manifestly against justice.

The cultivation of flax should be re-introduced for food as well as for fibre, and the manufacture of at least our own requirements of linen undertaken.

If farmers are to get satisfactory guarantees, protection, and equitable treatment generally, they must be compelled, where compulsion is necessary, to play their part, like other sections of the community.

- (a) Farmers must use their land in the nation's interest, as well as in their own.
- (b) They must grow the crops, and in such quantities, in scheduled wheat, beet, seeds, tobacco and other zones, as directed by the Department of Agriculture.
- (c) They must till a certain proportion of their arable land, unless they are able to satisfy the Department of Agriculture and the Parish Council that they are not able to do so.
- (d) They must pay their public debts—rates and annuities—except where sickness, death, or other grave causes, enable the Parish Council to recommend partial remission, or extended time to pay.
- (e) They must co-operate, in every way, with the Parish Council, and the central Departments of Government, for their own and the common good.



- (f) They must help whole-heartedly in every aspect of the National Recovery Plan, even though some of these may not affect or benefit them directly.

We must establish our own Cinema or Film Service for the production of films for home use, together with educational, historic and other useful films from abroad. Apart from its industrial aspect, home-produced films depicting real Irish life, modern and historic, would give to ourselves, and to the world, for the first time, a true representation of the country. This is necessary for retaining the goodwill of even our own people abroad. They are often ashamed of the garbled, distorted, stage-Irish and sometimes vindictive way in which the country is misrepresented. The Christian, social, economic and national demoralising influences of the present flood of foreign pictures of inferior type which afflict this country are incalculable—pictures extolling idleness, extravagance, superficiality and depravity of all kinds. All the small countries of Europe had to fight this battle against nationally demoralising films ; we must do the same or surrender entirely to them. To cut out this deadly, creeping poison, to support our plan to save the language, to teach history, to establish ourselves, even in our own estimation, as a distinct community, and in numerous other important ways, a National Film Producing Service is a vitally essential feature of a National Recovery Plan.

Dozens of other important features of social-economic recovery could easily be enumerated.

### FINANCE

One of the first questions which will arise in connection with these and many other proposals which might be cited is :—Where is the money to be found ? It is much easier to suggest work which might be done than to show how it can be financed. We need have no delusions as to the magnitude of this part of our problem of National Recovery. Its ramifications, both inside and outside the country, are immense.



But while the problem of Finance is of supreme importance, it must not be assumed that it is all-important, or that, if it were solved with apparent satisfaction, all our other difficulties would disappear. Finance is one of many vital factors which must be considered in the economic reconstruction of the country. It is the key which, with efficient organisation, will open the door to national prosperity. Appreciation of the balanced significance of all the factors, most of which lie unheeded at our very door, in association with Finance and National Credit, cannot be overstressed. For example, such simple considerations as private and departmental economy, national faith, co-operation, common sense, common judgment, private and public honesty, and a number of other fundamental things must be established. Even the best financial system that can be devised will not avail without the goodwill and good conduct of the people. The dishonest manipulation of money is one of the cardinal evils of the world, and it is only good laws, good systems and good organisation that will check its perpetrations anywhere.

Strictly speaking, we have no National Financial System in this country. Apparent parity with England exists, and our National Credit is mainly in private hands. Assurance and Insurance capital is largely controlled from abroad, and through the instrumentality of the English system our real capital is steadily falling into the possession of persons of foreign origin. These two forces—the Bank of England and foreign investors in this country—could create a local financial crisis here at any time. In fact, the crisis is already here. Then what of post-war conditions? According to an English financial expert the British financial system is itself nationally quite unsound. Here is what V. C. Vickers, late Governor, Bank of England, wrote in 1939, a short time before he died:—"Unless we can contrive to design and establish an improved and reformed financial system, which is the first essential towards a new and better economy in our own country, no satisfactory outcome of the war is possible, for where there is widespread injustice and discontent there can be no ending of that war. How can we presume to hold up



our own social system as a pattern for other nations to follow while it breeds selfishness, unrest and dishonest competition amongst our own people and while it is dominated by a decadent financial system?" He says further that the money industry in England has such powerful political and economic influences that it has "undermined the authority of the State, and usurped the power of democratic government". This is the system with which we are associated.

The Financial Secretary to the English Treasury stated in 1938 that "securing the greatest measure of prosperity in the country does not mean securing the prosperity of one industry or one class at the expense of another, or vice versa". This is a great change in a country where "vice versa", with all its slavery and want, and all its arrogance and wealth, has been the financial policy for two hundred years. Since we have adopted this system we have accumulated a smaller crop of the same fruits.

Up to a few years ago it was commonly believed, even by many economists, that very little could be done without plenty of real metal money and foreign credit. This theory seems to have been exploded. Nowadays we see the spectacle, considered impossible a little time ago, of big countries, with very little money or foreign credit, doing stupendous things. Whether a small nation like ours can accomplish proportionately great economic feats, with only paper money, is a question for real experts, imbued with a genuine Irish outlook and desire. There is no doubt that great things can be done, internally at least, if we have the courage and ability which this problem demands. As a tiny example of this, a parish committee in Wexford, in 1941, issued tallies or tokens for the cutting and saving of turf. Local traders honoured these tokens by supplying goods to the workers. When the turf was sold the committee redeemed the tokens. An elaboration of this simple credit scheme, on a very big scale, has been operating successfully in some countries for years past, without apparently causing inflation. The old skeleton—The Gold Standard—need not trouble us in the future. Even in England it was always a myth and will probably never be resurrected.



It is surprising that so many Irish people appear to see little or no difference between money expended inside the country productively and capital sent abroad. There is the greatest direct and indirect difference, of course, between them. Public money, judiciously spent within the country, is merely put into circulation. It matters not to the Government or to the nation who holds it at any time, provided it is doing its normal work of employment, production, exchange and consumption, and is fairly well distributed. On the other hand, money or materials that leave the country constitute real expenditure. If it be for the securing of things which we cannot produce at home, and which we require, such as tea and cocoa, well and good, but if it is to purchase things, such as wheat and barley, which we can produce efficiently at home, it is bad national economy.

Most Irish Financial Experts, who examine the question of finance from an Irish point of view, agree that our present national financial position is neither stable, efficient, nor nationally sound. If this is so, and from the evidence they give, and from the tragic consequences we see around us, it would appear that it is, the whole financial and national credit system of the country, and moneys invested abroad, must all be courageously investigated, from a purely national standpoint. The importance of this matter must be emphasised—that is, the urgent necessity for an examination of our financial position, from our own point of view, by real Irish experts who are prepared, if necessary, to recommend the breaking of parity with a country whose financial system appears to be rapidly deteriorating; and to frame and recommend an original monetary system, if need be, based confidently and exclusively on our own requirements. Both our financial system, when we have one, and our national credit should be controlled by the State. This is a vital part of our whole scheme. Full and efficient employment can be secured by the use of credit, issued and directed by a national monetary authority.

But there would be very little practical point in attempting to develop financial schemes or systems now. The



stressing of this apparently limitless question at this stage would only tend to confuse the other main national issues. We could wrangle over it till Doomsday. No Government, under the Party-Political-Proportional-Representation system, can deal adequately with this question. No sooner would far-reaching national financial recommendations be made than the Political Opposition would utilise the proposals for party political ends. This, as pointed out, has been done on several national and international issues already. Alarmist propaganda would be introduced, to stampede the people against the proposing Government, so that negation, withdrawal, or half-measure compromise would be the result.

Finance and financial credit control are matters with which a National Government, guided by genuine Irish expert advice, can effectively deal. In fact there is no feature of our economic life which calls so urgently for a strong National Government, in our own, and in present world circumstances, as our financial system, or our lack of one. But while we may prepare a scheme of action, the solving of the question is merely hypothetical until we have the machinery to deal with it.

Persons who are foolish enough, otherwise interested, or perhaps even hostile to the healthful recovery of the country, may like to see us dispute this question fatuously, without doing anything more; but surely we must have enough common sense and common ability to see this!

In New Zealand, where the financial-economic system was, in some important respects, similar to ours, the Government tried—as our Government did—to fight an adverse export trade in primary products by bounties, subsidies, increased cost of consumable goods at home and low wages, in order to maintain exports. The results were, great unemployment, wholesale failure of farmers, privation and hunger, in a country where food in abundance rotted or was destroyed.

With the island in a state of utter economic stagnation a strong Labour Government, with a progressive plan, was elected in 1935. Its economic policy stated that "the control of Currency and Credit is a prerogative of the State



and it is unthinkable that this control should remain in private hands". It stated also that the aim was "to organise an internal economy distributing the production of services in a way which will guarantee to every person able and willing to work an income sufficient to provide him and his dependents with everything necessary to make a home". By the use of an altered monetary system, suitable to the requirements of the country, the application of great constructive schemes of work and in other practical ways they not only succeeded in employing all their own able-bodied people efficiently but have been seeking labour from other countries, even from Ireland.

Portugal is another recent example of a country with many problems similar to ours. It also has solved many of its national difficulties, inside a remarkably short period, by the application of revised monetary, economic and other systems based on the conditions and requirements of the country.

World economists agree at present that the only possible way for any country to prevent inflationary disaster after the present war is through a strong Government supported by an enlightened, loyal and well-organised people. We have not any of these essentials and our first national duty is to set about their attainment. When that is done our financial, as well as all our other national problems, can and will be solved.

### FASHION AND SNOBBERY

Fashion might be defined as that almost universally accepted force which controls world outlook on dress, food, service, pleasures, pastimes, tastes, and social standing generally. Many people are so dominated by this urge that it becomes with them a devouring passion. Throughout the world to-day, fashion and snobbery appear to be the guiding hands that direct the aims and objects of many people. It is fashion and snobbery which decree, even amongst the poor, that normal Christian thrift, economy and common sense constitute meanness and



that dress and dress materials produced in our own land are "common" compared with expensive and oftentimes flimsy fabrics from abroad. It is fashion from paganised empire cities and film studios that directs people to dress and live extravagantly, whether beyond their means or not; and it is fashion which incites even women to proclaim their capacity for strong and expensive drink, and do other things unbecoming to their sex. It is fashion that often impels vulgar people, who have money, to do boorish things in its name, and it is fashion together with economic causes that is killing the Irish language and civilisation as well as many of the God-given qualities peculiar to our people. It is difficult indeed to limit the economic, social and even pagan perpetrations which fashion and snobbery may ordain.

Fashion in this broader sense constitutes a very important economic as well as social factor in every country. Its password is imitation. Persons will always be found to imitate even the most stupid, extravagant and unsuitable things, if fashion decrees it.

It is no libel to say that a great proportion of the Irish people are very imitative; we live more by habit and imitation than by reason. Probably the same holds everywhere, but a country like ours, which despises its own characteristics, is an easy prey to false and foolish imitation from abroad. In our case practically all our fashion is imitation from foreign cities and wealthy empires, where conditions are entirely different from our own. Our climate, for example, favours good skin and complexion yet we spend annually over £1,000,000 on cosmetics in imitation of less favoured peoples.

From general observation there appears to be much more wanton extravagance and wasteful spending in this country by the well-to-do, the foolish imitators of the well-to-do, and even by the poor, in proportion to our developed resources than in any other small country of Europe. There may not be sufficient statistics to prove this, but any observant person who has travelled Europe, particularly its smaller countries, will agree.

The gauge of social position in many quarters to-day



seems to hinge largely on the extent to which ambitious people are prepared to indulge in gaudy, and sometimes vulgar, excesses. Excessive gambling, excessive dress, lavish and expensive entertainments, and other extravagant, dangerous and nationally lowering practices, are gradually becoming established as the accepted hall-marks of social appreciation. This kind of thing is as old as pagan Rome and Egypt but it is also closely associated with modern world snobbery and neo-paganism. It is not a healthy example for a Christian country to imitate, even on a small scale.

The easiest way for individuals to find money for this snobbish fashion lust is by borrowing and exploitation, rather than by solvency and thrift. Also the easiest way for an extravagantly-run State to find the money is by borrowing and excessive taxation.

In many ways fashion and snobbery claim a comparatively heavy toll from the Irish nation. The foolish competition that is carried on, even down to the remotest village, in pursuing the various claims of fashion, constitutes not only a great financial drain but is also a serious source of domestic, social and even national trouble and distraction.

Fashion in this country should be sponsored and stimulated by a National Body, backed by the State. The State should exercise negative, and even positive direction, by, for instance, prohibiting the importation of materials unsuitable for the development of national fashion. This National Body would require no authority beyond that powerful force—example. Its orientation should be suitable to our climatic and other conditions and based, as far as possible, on Irish materials, traditions and customs. In this way educated foreigners would find in this country a civilisation striving to be itself rather than a second-rate imitation of Hollywood. Well-to-do people should be expected to follow Irish fashion. When they practise it, others will do the same.

Like that of National Finance, there is no advantage to be obtained from pursuing this question at the present time. Under our present systems, false imported fashion



and snobbery, with all their attendant evils, will continue to seep into the life of the country and dominate it more and more. It is evident now that neither Church nor State alone can control this Frankenstein monster. Only both combined, in an all-embracing plan, can make fashion conform to the common good.

## WHEAT

Some years ago the question: Whether or not we should grow wheat extensively in this country was made a Party Political issue. This did great damage to what was a purely national, economic question.

There are two distinct questions—very often confused—associated with wheat-growing in Ireland. These questions are: Can Wheat as a corn crop be grown successfully in Ireland? and: Can Wheat as a vital, world-wide bread material, be grown economically by the Irish farmer, in world competition?

The answer to the first question is that first-quality milling wheat can be grown in Ireland in great quantity; any competent authority will agree with this. The answer to the second question is that, generally speaking, milling wheat cannot be grown economically in quantity by the Irish farmer in open world competition under present economic conditions.

It is extraordinary the number of people who have grave doubts as to whether wheat can be grown successfully in Ireland. This is the result of a wide-spread campaign that has been carried on, mostly by persons who appear to have very little practical knowledge of the matter. These persons, nevertheless, give verdicts and opinions which are often ill-founded.

An Archæological discovery in 1941 established the fact that wheat was grown in Ireland in the Bronze Age. History repeatedly confirms that it has been grown here for a very long time and, in 1847, the year of the worst artificial famine in our history, over six hundred thousand acres of wheat were grown in Ireland. This area would



supply our entire bread requirements at present. A great deal of this wheat was exported to England, although thousands of Irish people were dying of hunger at the time. Even in the worst Free Trade years, before the 1914-18 Great War, some twenty to thirty thousand acres of milling wheat were grown annually in Ireland, and in 1919, as the result of an actual crop survey of the country, it was shown that over sixty thousand acres were under wheat in that year. At that time wheat was produced against the almost overwhelming inflow of cheap wheat from America. Moreover, the Counties having the biggest voluntary area under this crop in peace times, have been Cork, Wexford, Galway, Down and Dublin. This shows that wheat can be grown successfully in every quarter of the country. It shows also that it must have been produced fairly near the economic margin, since it was grown in world competition, without any help or protection whatever against the imported grain. The Midlands, and the Golden Vale of Limerick and Tipperary, where there is some of the finest wheat-land in the world, produced only very small quantities in recent peace years. This is contrary to common sense, sound economics and even humanity itself.

If one travels in Central or Northern Europe he will find "black bread", made from rye and barley, the staple food. It is more healthful than our much-vaunted snow-white loaf. The reason why rye and barley bread is used so extensively in all those countries is that wheat will not succeed well there because it is very sensitive to temperature, and germinates best at 65 to 69 degrees Fahrenheit. This is far above the late Autumn and Spring temperature over a great part of Northern Europe and Northern Canada.

In those areas of Europe, where wheat will not succeed because of unsuitable temperature, the people do not import white flour or wheat in great quantities. They might do so relatively at a cheaper rate than they can produce and mill the rye and barley crop at home. They depend instead mainly on the corns that will ripen in their own climate. They realise that it would be neither nationally safe nor economically sound to do otherwise.



Many arguments are advanced against the suitability of our soil and climate for wheat-growing. Most of these arguments are unsound, and some rather foolish. But here are some genuine drawbacks against wheat-growing in Ireland :

- (1) Even when well saved, Irish wheat contains more moisture than, say, Manitoban. Millers sometimes object to Irish wheat because it usually requires to be kiln-dried.
- (2) Some varieties have a comparatively low gluten content and, therefore, low bread-raising capacity.
- (3) Wheat tends to encourage the growth of weeds, because it occupies the ground longer than other corn crops.
- (4) Late sown wheat on wet, retentive, clay soil is liable to be patchy or to fail. Mid-October to early November is generally the best time to sow autumn varieties.

It is often said that wheat is hard on the soil. I know farms where wheat has been grown in rotation for forty or fifty years without apparently impoverishing the soil. Comparative chemical analyses of different crops do not bear out this contention either. In fact, according to analysis, barley is more severe on the soil than wheat.

All these objections can be overcome by good farming methods, intelligence, foresight, a profitable market and goodwill.

Wheat does best, usually, on a stiff, dry, well-conditioned clay loam, but it can be grown reasonably well on a great variety of soils, if they are in good condition. It is a mistake to advocate wheat-growing unconditionally. In the poorer parts of the country most of the soil is unsuitable for wheat, just as most of the heavier wheat soils are unsuitable for barley. Persons who have grown wheat in unfavourable circumstances, or without sufficient knowledge, sometimes condemn the crop because it has not succeeded in their own locality where, perhaps, it should never have been grown.

The tradition of wheat-growing and its economic home use were lost in a great area of the country. It will take



time to get them back. In the meantime faulty samples of Irish wheat may be marketed, and faulty loaves made from whole wheat flour and meal, but this is not evidence that the crop cannot be grown and used successfully in suitable circumstances and when capably handled. Neither is the craze for white bread proof that white bread is best. It took the consequences of our unsound economic system, coupled with the exigencies of the second Great War, to convince thousands of Irish people that all-wheat bread suited their digestive system better than that from bleached white flour.

Generally speaking, as stated already, Irish farmers cannot compete successfully in an open world market, in the production of wheat, in present economic circumstances. To argue from this fact that we should, therefore, depend on America, or wherever else we can buy wheat cheaper, is utterly wrong. It is one of the most unsound features of our present Agricultural Economic System.

When beet-growing was advocated some years ago, many people believed that the project would fail because it could not compete against foreign sugar. The wisdom of adopting this policy of growing our own beet is now universally acknowledged. Nationally speaking, wheat is in exactly the same position. Wheat-growing must be protected in somewhat the same way that sugar beet has been protected. The price for wheat, sugar beet and other protected crops must be such that farmers can be compelled to grow them, if needs be, in scheduled areas.

Private property has a social as well as an individual aspect, and the State has a right to see that the social aspect is carried out "to benefit the whole community." (*Rerum Novarum*.) "The natural order, which comes from God, requires the institution of private property, and the power of the State to regulate it for the common good." (Pius XII., 1941.)

You cannot in justice compel farmers to grow crops at a loss. This is why compulsion and compulsory tillage require such careful and experienced handling.

An argument often used against the policy of growing crops against world prices is that it will inflict hardships



on the poor and on the community generally. The political slogan, that your food will cost you more, will probably be introduced. This argument is based on post-Victorian conditions. It is usury, exploitation and limitless incomes, coupled with non-organisation, which inflict hardships on the poor. In a well-organised Christian State, there should be no poor, able-bodied people, excepting those who are poor through their own fault. This policy towards wheat and other crops would not press unduly on any section of the community in a State so organised.

Having guaranteed the grower an economic market, a wheat zone, or zones, in those areas where wheat will grow successfully, should be defined. This work could probably be done best by the Department of Agriculture. These zones would be mainly situated in the Counties Kildare, Meath, Louth, Dublin, Tipperary, Limerick, Down and parts of other counties, such as Cork, Westmeath, Waterford, Roscommon, Galway and Wexford. In these areas farmers holding more than a certain area of suitable arable land would be scheduled. They would be expected to grow, in rotation, a certain minimum proportion of wheat each year, unless they are entitled, for some valid reason, to partial or entire exemption. They should be facilitated in getting the best possible seed, manure, advice and labour. They should be expected to grow the crop properly and market the grain in good condition. An adequate guaranteed price may in itself secure all the wheat we require, but in present circumstances the zoning system will be surest and best.

A second arm to our national wheat effort should be the encouragement of areas, small or great, but particularly small areas for home and local use, outside the scheduled wheat zones. Small areas of wheat for home and local use can be grown successfully in most parts of the country, in well-conditioned patches here and there.

Local mills should be helped and encouraged to install suitable machinery for flour, wholemeal production and other corn milling, our national aim being to produce and mill all the corn for bread as well as other corn products that we need.



Normally, up to a few years ago, we imported about £12,000,000 worth of wheat, flour and animal foods, annually. Some economists point out that to pay for this we must export some such commodity as cattle, in great number. This is perfectly true, but a more hopeless national solution for this nation-killing, vicious circle could hardly be propounded. Economic critics who favour "grass" and imported food and feeding stuff usually say that, if you "wipe out" the cattle trade, dire economic results will follow. But no sensible person advocates the "wiping out" of the cattle trade. Intensive cultivation of wheat and other crops, and the breaking up of grass prairies into economic tillage farms, will not "wipe out" the cattle trade, though it may reduce somewhat the number of live stock for export. This would be in accordance with present, and very probably with future, demands. Output of farm stock for export, at the present rate, is out of all proportion to the present and probably to the future economic requirements of any country to which we can send them. Considerably reduced numbers of live stock, more efficiently marketed, would be a more business-like proposition, and more economically and more nationally sound.

Exporting our basic population of men and women, and great numbers of store cattle, so that we can import wheat and maize, is truly strange national economics. People who cry out against self-sufficiency in bread, because, forsooth, it will press on the poor, seldom rebel against the complete loss of millions of our people by poverty, disease, and emigration, as a direct result of our present systems.

Under the altered plan, men and women, instead of being forced off the land by bullocks, will occupy their rightful, Christian, national and economic place in the Midlands. During the past eighty or ninety years, while our human population steadily decreased in rural areas, the livestock population just as steadily increased. People should live on these good lands, in great numbers, utilising cattle to convert their surplus crops to economic advantage, rather than that cattle for export should occupy



the lands, in great numbers, requiring only a few herds to mind them.

I have dealt in some detail with wheat because it is an example of one of our very important products, viciously vilified by ourselves. In a country with normal systems and outlook one need not defend wheat-growing and other matters of this kind. Like the production of potatoes and oats, wheat-growing and other usual branches of our industry would be normal also.

Heretofore we have imported practically all our clover, flax, root and garden seeds on the same thriftless principle, viz., that other people could grow them more cheaply than we could. Practically all of these seeds can be grown quite as successfully in Ireland as elsewhere.

In 1941 for example one thousand five hundred tons of first-class beet seed, valued to the farmer at close on £100,000, were grown in this country by about one thousand growers. We require over three thousand tons of grass, clover, root and vegetable seeds each year. The valuable ramifications of even a small industry like this are much greater and more stabilising than the direct gain to the growers would indicate. The Department of Agriculture should define belts or zones of the country where each of these classes of seed will grow best. People in those areas should then specialise in particular species, and be properly paid for their labour. The Plant Breeding Section of the University would, at the same time, develop the purest and best strains of all these plants, for our climate and requirements.

We have a great tendency in this country to overlook comparatively small savings and small enterprises of any kind. They are considered too insignificant to claim our attention. We have a great tendency also to jump to the conclusion that, if an economic, educational or other change is advocated, it implies "wiping out" something else. Common moderation, common sense, and common humanity "wipe out" only what is false, extravagant or unsound. The rectification of this weakness, together with rigid sensible economy, would constitute one of the main planks in our social, as well as our economic, recon-



struction. In our circumstances every family that is kept in industry, no matter how small, put on the land, or helped to remain on the land, is a national asset of prime importance.

These views and recommendations on National Economy are merely suggestive. There are a great many others. The main object is, to show that our present National Economic System is at fault; that our course is towards defeat; that it cannot lead in any other direction while our present systems last; and in general terms to indicate how our economic system might be rectified.

To sum up, bearing all these points in mind, and many other vital ones which have been omitted, the only National Economic Policy by which we can maintain ourselves successfully, and progress healthfully, in present world circumstances, is :

- (1) To produce everything that our people require, and that we can produce efficiently, irrespective of world prices.
- (2) To economise, to avoid waste, to live within our means, and to prevent extravagance and wanton luxuries, amongst any section of the community. The State has a right, according to Christian Teaching, to insist that this is carried out for the common good. The three great Popes of our time, Leo XIII, Pius XI, and the reigning Pope, Pius XII, have all emphasised the right of the State to act thus. They have denied that the right to acquire, to hold, or to use property is absolute or unconditional.
- (3) To control our Finance and our Credit.
- (4) To build up a national shipping fleet.
- (5) To develop our natural resources to the full.
- (6) To inculcate and maintain in our people through our Educational System, and otherwise, a truly Christian, national, co-operative spirit and to develop as one inseparable whole all the essential features of our civilisation, spiritual, cultural and material.



Common sense, of course, must be exercised in all these things; we could, for instance, produce oranges under glass, but no person would suggest that we should compete with the world in the production of this crop. There are many other things such as tea, or specialised industrial plant and products, which we cannot produce. This, however, is only a further reason why we should produce all the things that we require, and can produce efficiently at home.

In an economic system on the lines, and in the spirit outlined here, and as part of a comprehensive National Recovery Plan, can be founded Agricultural and Industrial stability, and also the primary objective of all organisation—the building up of the nation itself, in practical accordance with the Law of Christ.

## CHAPTER V

### National Games and Pastimes and National Action

Like most other features of our way of life physical culture, games and pastimes, in this country, have become nationally very confused. Foreign games and pastimes constitute a serious source of national disunion, particularly among young people. If we are sincere about our national recovery, national pastimes must be effectively utilised as part of our National Plan.

National games and pastimes are those which have been developed in association with national characteristics and traditions. Cricket and Rugby football, for example, have pronouncedly British associations; Baseball is American, and Hurling, Handball and Gaelic Football are definitely Irish. Jazz is a Negro production, while Irish dancing is traditionally Gaelic.

Whether Hurling and Gaelic Football originated in this country or not is beside the point. Both games have been fostered and developed in Ireland for generations: they



are, therefore, truly national, and have not been advanced as national games in any other country.

In their own place, games and pastimes are necessary for national well-being. Nations which are strong and vigorous recognise and utilise national games and pastimes for national advance. In England, for example, national games are recognised as being of supreme importance. It is, in fact, difficult to visualise a country which maintains a high standard of cultural and economic development where games do not play an important part. A people, on the other hand, who are degenerating or weakening in national fibre, tend to discard their own characteristics, and to laud and imitate those of the foreigner. To assert, as the promoters of foreign games and pastimes in Ireland often do, that one form of athletics or dancing is as good for a people as another, or that an oval ball is as good as a round one, is tantamount to saying that one flag has the same significance as another because they are made from the same kind of cloth. In either case it is not the things themselves that are of national importance but the traditions and associations for which they ordinarily stand. Where foreign games remain shrouded in foreign associations, as they do substantially here, they will certainly help to bring about national disunion and reverse. The playing of foreign games brings with it the reading of particular foreign papers—corroding sources of national and social weakness.

The secret of any small nation's success in the world to-day can be gauged by her dogged attachment to her own civilisation. The greatest secret of our national failure has been our dogged tendency to do the opposite. It is one of the few things about which a section of our people has shown determination. Such persons take every opportunity to prove that there is nothing in a particular national characteristic which they want to discard, that it is not an important part of Irish Nationality, or they question the fact that it is Irish at all. This attitude is considered as proof of broadmindedness and sportsmanship. Many "broadminded" people decry Irish music because



its range for them is too restricted, yet the very same people accept jazz as all-satisfying.

Gaelic Football and Hurling have been played in England for half a century, by Irish settlers there, yet no English Club or College has ever adopted either game. This is, without any question, solely on the grounds that they are not English. The merits of the games are not in dispute, but rather the tradition and spirit that are attached to them. They recognise this, and so their boycott of hurling and Gaelic football is complete. Moreover, they are not accused by the sporting, cosmopolitan Irish of being narrow-minded or unsportsmanlike because they do so.

In a country which is fighting a life or death struggle against foreign characteristics and associations that have eaten into every fibre, "men" said MacSwiney, "must be more insistent to watch every little defect and weak tendency".

Development of the mind without corresponding disciplined development of the body is not educationally sound. The playing and encouragement of games, therefore, should be laid down as part of the official programme of schools and colleges. It should also be established, without question, that these games and pastimes are national. Steps should be taken to see that this section of the programme is being carried out, as a practical, and very important section of National Recovery. If examination requirements cramp, crush or restrict the normal practice of games from the curriculum at any period of the year, then such requirements are excessive and are not in the best interests of well-balanced education.

Dancing is a universal, and, of course, a legitimate form of amusement. Forms of so-called dancing, not in conformity with either Christian or Irish standards, have come into this country from abroad in recent years. These negroid imitations, and their many undesirable associations, like an epidemic out of hand, have ramified through every corner of the Country. Foreign fashion and snobbery have adopted them. It will take National Fashion, backed by National Spirit, to drive them out.

Irish dances are modest, graceful, stylish and distinct.



It is a fundamental characteristic of Irish dancing that the nearest approach to contiguity is the joining of partly out-stretched hands. They should secure universal clerical and parental support.

A practical objection often advanced by staid people against Irish dances is that, for them, the majority of Irish dances are strenuous. There appear to be reasonable grounds for this objection, and we should set ourselves the task of establishing some dances that will adequately meet this requirement. We must develop Irish dancing, on traditional lines, as we go along.

In most rural districts there is no social meeting place for young people, except the idle cross roads by day and the jazz hall by night. The demoralising influences of this condition do not appear to be fully recognised by parents and other responsible people.

It must be a duty of Parish Councils to provide sports fields, handball alleys, swimming pools and parish halls, not only for each parish but for each large district of a parish that requires them. Suitable meeting places of this kind for young people are absolutely essential, where informal, as well as organised pastimes, can be practised.

Parish halls should be the property of the parish. They must be controlled by responsible parish committees and utilised for cultural as well as recreative purposes.

Every nation, in a state of war or emergency, if it has any cohesion, strives to unite. We are in as serious a state of national peril now as a country which is actually at war. Our people and our substance are being wasted from within by other, and equally devouring, causes, which threaten our very existence. National unity must be as complete and unrelenting as the forces of the national mischief it is called upon to destroy. If we are in earnest we shall succeed. If we are not in earnest we need not try. Aliens, and those who are opposed to what is becoming once again "The Hidden Ireland", are coming gradually into full and open control. Will the Irish people allow this to proceed? Will they go back again to bondage of another, and more nationally destructive, kind, or will they assert themselves, and justify their own past and their own future?



## CHAPTER VI

## The Civil Service and National Action

Like all our other national systems, the present Civil Service System was inherited from the English Government, twenty years ago. Like them it was nationally unsound.

Under the British Government, in this country, the administration of Departments of State, and Sections of Departments, was almost entirely in the hands of clerks; that is, of persons usually possessing no technical qualifications, and, in most cases, with little or no practical knowledge of the country, or of its industries. This system has been continued practically as it was handed over. Clerical officials are still placed in almost all administrative posts. There are technical advisers, no doubt, in some Departments, but they are ordinarily subordinated to administering clerks. These clerical officials, after being "advised", often give decisions on matters about which they do not, and cannot be expected to know much—except on paper. No business concern, in this or any other country, is run on these lines. If it were so run it would probably go bankrupt in a short time.

It is not an uncommon occurrence to find a clerical official, who may have very little practical knowledge of a particular business, or the circumstances surrounding it, advising a Minister who may have little or no practical knowledge of it either. Neither is it uncommon to find some officials overburdened with work, while others are not sufficiently occupied. It is a well-known peculiarity of the Civil Service system that the expenditure of five or ten shillings demands much more elaborate scrutiny than the spending of five or ten thousand pounds. Once the bigger sum is sanctioned, its spending is a matter of routine. Another peculiarity of the system is that Civil Servants are practically debarred from taking an active part in the public life of the country. To all intents and purposes,



the Civil Servant is disfranchised except that he is allowed to vote. If the author of this book were a Civil Servant, for example, and if he published even one of the essays comprising it over his name, he would render himself liable to dismissal. What a System! All this tends to stultify the Civil Servant's outlook on public affairs, and to narrow and warp his whole character.

In the Civil Service the application of ordinary humanity is not encouraged. Official regulations take no special count of difficult human circumstances. In this way, most extraordinary and inexplicable things are perpetrated in the blind and rigid pursuit of rules. In the Civil Service also, originality, business alertness, the desire to save time and expenditure, the taking of decisions based on practical common sense, or on the facts of the particular case in point, are not only discouraged but might be penalised. Cases could be cited in which Civil Servants have been officially reprimanded for advocating constructive recommendations. It is much easier and safer, in these circumstances, to follow the safe and stagnant track, and to shake the warning finger of caution against any courageous change. A capable officer sees early in life that in order to advance he must stick closely to the rules, take no chances, offer no unorthodox suggestions, and, above all things, watch details with an eagle eye. He must put even the most insignificant things on paper and learn to agree, or at least simulate agreement, with his superior. This is why Civil Servants make obscure regulations, stick to them meticulously, have literally myriads of forms, ask many questions, shirk decisions, and meet all advances, even the most reasonable ones, with the ever ready, non-committal answer—The rule is there.

This condition is on a parallel with our estimates and values in educational and other directions. In our systems, facts, the things of life and practical training play second fiddle. A technical adviser, after spending years of his life acquiring practical knowledge and experience, has usually to defend proposals, reports and recommendations against all kinds of senseless queries and objections. In the circumstances, the technical adviser finds, in time,



that it pays to be cute and careful too, and keep to the beaten track. If he does not do so, his official life will not be a bed of roses. Cuteness and caution are the Civil Service keys which will open many doors.

When the various Government Departments were re-established twenty years ago, it was laid down that all proposed expenditure should be submitted for approval to the Ministry of Finance. This was apparently intended as a check on extravagance. Certain sums are voted by the Dáil every year, for the running of each Department under various headings, based on estimates. The Ministry of Finance must then give sanction for detailed spending. But the Department of Finance is not provided with Technical Advisers to ascertain whether a particular expenditure is justified or not. Ordinarily then this Department, by various questioning, with-holding and so on, keeps down expenditure ad hoc.

It must not be assumed from this that Civil Servants are either slow or inefficient. They are, as a rule, highly competent to carry out a static policy according to rigid and static rules. Any other set of intelligent persons, similarly placed, would probably do the same. It is not the Civil Servants who are responsible but this extraordinary system in which they are compelled to work.

Immediately a crisis arises in which advancing decisions have to be made, or that any progressive action is attempted, this whole system is liable to break down. How could a country progress in such circumstances? How could great, broad, courageous, national action be embarked upon within such hide-bound regulations, and by machinery which was deliberately made and shaped to prevent advancement?

The obvious remedy for the present very expensive, and very inefficient system, is, to put competent persons who understand the business in hand in administrative charge; persons who can meet the public, give decisions based on the facts and on their own initiative, rather than by rule and on the advice of others, and who will assume personal responsibility for the decisions they make, without falling back on precedents and water-tight regulations: To meet



this situation where necessary technically and otherwise suitably qualified persons of any age should be taken into the Civil Service.

In any business concern the clerical staff carries out the decisions of practically and technically qualified administrators. The same common sense principle should rule the biggest and most important business concern in the country—the efficient management of the business of the State.

Any Government that is attempting to carry out a fixed objective policy, with thoroughness and efficiency, will place in key positions in Government Departments, persons who will sincerely endorse the National Policy, and who will see that that policy is carried out in the spirit as well as in the letter. Unsympathetic officials, placed in responsible positions, can vitiate almost any aspect of Government policy by various means and omissions, which are well known in the service, and which cannot be easily detected.

There are at present some 27,000 Civil Servants in the twenty-six county area of this country, costing over £5,000,000 annually. In a revised, common sense system, this number could be reduced by many thousands, and much more useful service obtained from the remainder. This can only be carried out as part of a great National Reconstruction Plan, in which adequate employment for those redundant would automatically arise.



## CHAPTER VII

## National Population and National Action

The estimated population of the twenty-six counties of Ireland now controlled by the Irish Government, in 1940, was 2,958,000. The estimated population of the same area in 1920 was 3,103,000. To go back further still the population of the same twenty-six counties in 1850 was over 5,000,000. The estimated population of the whole of Ireland in 1940 was 4,254,000, as compared with that of 4,485,000 in 1920.

It will be noted that the fall in population in the six-county area during the past twenty years is even relatively greater than that in the twenty-six counties. Emigration and steadily falling numbers of marriages, births and school-going children, in both areas, predict the same dismal trend in the future.

Falling total population is only part of the tragic story. There is a steady trend of population, all the time, from rural areas to the towns. Since 1926 Dublin and environs alone have absorbed over 70,000 people from the country parts of Ireland. It is in rural Ireland, in fact, that the steady decline in the absolute population of the country is taking place.

From any point of view that it is examined this is, nationally speaking, a very serious situation. In a poor, barren country, where it would be impossible to produce adequate food and clothing for a growing population, it would be explainable. In a country like ours, teeming with healthy food, suitable clothing materials, and other national essentials, with natural facilities for the production of at least two or three times as much food and clothing again, and with a good climate, the explanation of our falling population must be sought for elsewhere.



The cause, or rather the combined causes, are deep and many-sided. These are becoming widespread and more deep-rooted from year to year. If this national calamity is not practically grappled with soon, and if its many causes and consequences are allowed to go on unchecked, we are well on the way to becoming in a few decades the most sad and terrifying spectacle of all—a dying people in our own Land. It is sad to see families with grand traditions dying out. It is also terrifying, because this is opposed to a universal command of God—"Increase and multiply until the earth is filled". Viewed in this way, the greatest Christian test, and therefore the greatest universal test of the success and virility of a nation, is not that it should over-run, rob and murder its neighbours, but that its normal population should be maintained at home, and should increase as the natural and other resources of the country permit.

If our present falling population rate continues for long one can easily visualise a stronger and more vigorous people seizing this excuse to come in, and simply take a land lying in natural default for want of an adequate native population. This is taking place at present on a small scale, but if we don't wake up, what of the future? This has happened before in the world, in other circumstances, in other lands. I know of no country where it is happening to-day except in our own. The native populations of several countries are being crushed out by people who have taken their countries from them. This is a different story from that of a people, in their own land, not seriously hampered from outside, or by economic or other insurmountable causes from within, slowly but surely dwindling away. The partition of our country, perpetrated and maintained by England, weakening and dividing though it is, cannot be held mainly or primarily responsible for this national condition.

The direct and immediate causes of our falling population are, fewer marriages, late marriages, small families and emigration. The basic cause of all this is economic. In fact, a falling marriage rate is, in itself, a direct indication of



an unsound economic system. Along the west of Ireland, where the last remnant of the Irish language, folk culture and tradition, in their native setting, are tenaciously clinging for existence, seventy-five per cent. of the marriageable young people are unable to settle down because of economic causes. What alien frightfulness failed to accomplish, complacent inefficiency may finally complete.

Brave young men and women are prepared to work, to organise, to suffer, and even to lay down their lives for their country, but no young people, with normal energy and ambition, can be expected to stagnate perpetually in enforced and barren idleness.

The basic remedy for our falling population is wrapped up in the political, economic, educational and other reforms outlined in NATIONAL ACTION. It is for the young men and women of Ireland to decide if the present national manslaughter is to continue, or if they will organise and use the legitimate, God-given means—outlined in NATIONAL ACTION—to prevent it.

It must not be assumed that economic rectification alone will solve this question. Some of the wealthiest countries in the world have falling populations: not because of economic stringency but from deliberate violation of the law of Christ. The most race-ravaging and insidious world cause of small families, or no families, to-day, is race suicide, or immoral birth control. This national blight, State-encouraged in several countries, has already, in our own time, brought some of the greatest and proudest nations on earth to their knees. The plague is spreading. In a non-organised country like ours, prone to imitate, it would be too much to hope that we should escape entirely from this race-rotting iniquity. It is vigorously, but rather single-handedly opposed by the Catholic Church. This evil cannot be stamped out by the Church alone. The Church's efforts must be equally and positively supported by the State. Neither half-measures, restraint, "kid gloves" nor political caution will avail against it. First offence warnings and petty fines for traffickers must



be replaced, without mitigation, by penal servitude, expulsion of aliens, and the lash.

The more general causes of small families in Ireland are natural causes. In many cases, these are possibly brought about by the reduced physical vigour of our people, resulting from defective education, false social standards, foolish fashions, and malnutrition. Malnutrition is possibly as prevalent amongst the well-to-do, from faulty dieting, as it is through low dieting amongst the poor. Economic caution and fear of economic difficulties in the upbringing and future of children, play a prominent part also. Apart from economic causes the whole environment, outlook and trend in modern world civilisation favour and encourage late marriages, smaller families and bachelor life. Imported films portraying sterile married life, a great proportion of the lighter literature in the English language, pagan, so-called hygienic teaching from abroad, and various other forms of publicity and propaganda, all combine to undermine the traditional family life of this and other Christian countries and communities.

The custom, fashion, or national affliction of late marriages and bachelorhood has become widely established in both town and country. The average age at which Irish people marry in their own land is the highest in Europe, possibly in the world. The proportion of unmarried persons of marriageable age is also one of the highest in the world. The chief causes of late marriage and celibacy in Ireland, outside of economic ones, are custom, parental influence, particularly in rural areas, selfishness, physical inferiority, and undue caution. Summed up, it is want of manly and womanly faith and courage on the part of young people, who are in a position to marry, to face responsibilities which are demanded by God and required by the nation.

The remedy for this condition must be tackled in a well-organised way by Church and State combined. As with other of our national problems, neither Church nor State can succeed alone ; both in close and energetic collaboration can. Like our other national problems the cure must lie within, and as part of, a great all-embracing National Recovery Plan. There is no use in continuing the nationally



futile process of the past hundred years by which great numbers of healthy children were reared and educated for emigration. A normal country from which excessive emigration—seasonal or otherwise—is taking place is obviously, without question, in an unhealthy condition. One of the chief crimes cited against the misgovernment of this country by England was that great numbers of Irish people had to emigrate. Under the Party Political System, during the past twenty years, apart from the appalling emigration rate at present, emigration has been relatively as great as during any corresponding period, except after the “famine” years, of the past century.

From a purely economic point of view, it has been estimated that it costs, on an average, £1,000 to rear and educate a person to manhood or womanhood. Each person who emigrates is consequently a direct economic loss to the nation, apart from the other and more serious forms of loss that emigration of our basic population entails.

During the year ended September 30th, 1941, travel permits were issued to 27,401 persons leaving the twenty-six county area of this country to take up employment elsewhere; while in the corresponding year ending September 30th, 1942, travel permits were issued to 50,821 persons. A total of 63,951 able-bodied males and 14,271 able-bodied females left this part of the country in those two years. Out of a falling population of less than three millions, in the twenty-six counties, this is a staggering proportion. Nothing at all like it is taking place in any other country in the world. It is the most damning and conclusive judgment against our present public systems that could possibly be propounded. The time for discussion, argument and disunity is past. The very existence of the nation calls for urgent and united National Action.

This country should have at least two or three times its present population. Properly organised, it could support them in healthier, happier, and more vigorous condition than that in which it maintains its dwindling four and a quarter millions in the whole of Ireland to-day.

Many practical suggestions might be advanced for the building up of our population by the encouragement of



marriages, earlier marriages, larger families and so on, as part of a great nation-building campaign. Reiterating that full and efficient employment, resulting from the practical effects of re-organised systems, is the basic remedy; here are a few subsidiary ways and means; there are dozens of others about which we need not trouble at the moment. These are merely examples.

- (1) The Church might undertake a nation-wide, far-reaching spiritual drive. Pamphlets might be prepared and distributed, missionary work might stress it, and local parish clergy might still further encourage marriage.
- (2) Parish Councils should take an active part in this work.
- (3) The rate of income tax relief for families should be generous and progressive. The income tax regulation by which parents get only the same income tax relief for the sixth or eighth as for the first child is wrong. The more children there are in a family the more relatively expensive each extra child becomes. Strain on the parents' income becomes progressively greater also. Income tax relief for the sixth and eighth child should be several times greater than that for the first. From 1922 to 1931 the income tax relief in this country for the first child was £36 and for each succeeding child £27. In principle this was entirely wrong. For the past two years the relief for each child, including the first, is £60. While being a great improvement from the population point of view, this is wrong also. The relief for the first child might be reduced to £10 or £20 and the relief for each succeeding child progressively increased.
- (4) Bachelors should be heavily taxed in various ways, and the basic income tax on bachelors should be very steeply graded.
- (5) A labourer, who is a bachelor, should not be allowed to occupy a County Council or Corporation cottage



for which parents of families are contributing portion of the cost.

- (6) A bachelor should not be allowed to buy houses or lands beyond a certain money's worth, or without contributing a very steeply graded sum in taxes.
- (7) A bachelor who holds land should be compelled to let all of it, above a fixed proportion of arable land. There are, at present, thousands of elderly bachelors holding extensive tracts of the best land in the country. This condition must be gradually but steadily eliminated. Elderly bachelors have no moral, national or economic right to monopolise large tracts of national land while all around them children of poorer people are undernourished. They should be compelled to let such land, at a reasonable rate, to labourers and small farmers with families, for the production of crops and milk.

It may be said that these suggestions are severe and interfere unduly with the individual and vested rights. The maintenance of the race, in our condition, demands severe measures. The right of the nation to live is more important than the property rights of bachelors.

- (8) Young people in every walk of life must be encouraged and facilitated to marry at the natural age for marriage. If they don't do so, they should be economically penalised. This must be a basic factor of a National Recovery Plan.
- (9) The most serious hindrances to early marriage in country districts are :
  - (a) refusal of parents to give permission to their child who is to succeed them in the home, to marry at a normal age.
  - (b) Delaying marriage of the eldest son until the house is cleared, that is, until the other children have left. This, of course, is also largely economic. Parish Councils backed by special State loans



would help considerably to solve many of these cases.

- (10) Wives of well-to-do men should be debarred from holding or obtaining remunerative public positions, and both men and women should be, as far as practicable, confined to occupations for which they are naturally and otherwise suitable. It is nationally wrong to see mothers of families working while their husbands are idle, but economic prosperity is the final cure.
- (11) The State should compel industrial firms to favour married men in employment, as part return to the nation for protection and other forms of help.
- (12) A comprehensive scheme of family allowances for wage earners with large families must be organised under a revised economic system. Recent family legislation in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Argentine and Brazil—all Catholic countries—embraces many benefits and protections for large families. These include special privileges regarding education, taxation, travel and holidays, special unemployment benefits, marriage and other allowances, and protection of mothers. Repayment of loans is mitigated in proportion to the size of the family.

In like manner with us, early marriage and large families must be practically championed by Church and State combined. It will require the whole-hearted co-operation of the people and of public bodies of all kinds. This co-operation must be demanded and organised, for the simple reason that it is urgently required for the maintenance and Christian progress of the nation.

The land of this country is capable of holding a direct farmer-labourer population of two or three million people more than it holds at present. Take our ten or twelve million acres of arable land, and the millions of acres of land that are capable of reclamation by proper large-scale treatment; divide this into, say, three classes: rich, medium and poor. It will be found from statistical returns and general observation that the populations supported by



these three classes of land are directly opposed to all the laws of national, economic and social order. The poor land supports the greatest population and the rich the least.

In our present circumstances it is correct to say that the land of this country cannot hold any more people. As a matter of fact it is steadily continuing to hold less. But are we prepared to allow these defeatist conditions to continue? Are we prepared to allow national ineptitude, sterility and anti-national vested interests to despoil the Irish nation? Are we prepared to allow the lands, the water-ways and the seas of Ireland to fall into decay, and finally into foreign hands, while the remnant of our race steals to the ends of the earth for sustenance denied it at home?

We have shown supreme courage against oppression and invasion, but moral, political, social, educational and economic forms of courage are called for now. Surely the Irish nation, that has survived such terrible trials in the past, has a greater destiny for God and mankind than our present picture holds? The answer lies with ourselves.

## CONCLUSION

There are a great many other practical aspects of National Recovery, such as our Social System, that might be discussed. I believe, however, that all the factors which have been introduced are sufficient to indicate a comprehensive, practical line of National Action.

The social system of a country, for example, is chiefly the product of its other systems. There is no use in merely discussing our present social system, with its many faults, and undesirable tendencies, while we retain the source from which its weaknesses mainly spring. We must tackle first things first.

It may be advanced that all these proposals are too idealistic for a practical world. It is the abandonment of idealism in the past twenty years, through the instrumentality of false systems and false social standards, that has



brought this country to its present impasse. Materialism, individualism and cynicism have occupied the void which was left when the idealism of Pearse, MacSwiney and their like was driven out. It is only an idealistic plan, provided it has practicability and common sense to recommend it, that can or will save us now from otherwise inevitable defeat.

If we have the national spirit, courage, will, faith, sincerity and perseverance, to put a National Plan of this kind into practice, the details will follow in due course, our national faith will be justified and our nation will live and grow and prosper as a practising Christian nation should.

Books without number have been written on practically every feature of every subject that has been merely touched on here, so that destructive critics will have an open field. My aim, as stated in the beginning, is not to hurt or offend anyone, but to present the framework of a practical Plan which may save our country in its slithering, aimless course towards the unknown, and again, in the name of God and of Ireland, I call on educated, intelligent, young Irish men and women to join together in this great, glorious task—to save our People, our Culture and our Land.